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BROWNING



A5 Realtree Max-5 Camo

Item #: **0118212004**
 Caliber: **12 Gauge**
 Sights: **Fiber Optic Front**
 Capacity: **4+1**
 BBL: **28"**

- Realtree Max-5 Camo Finish
- Composite, Realtree Max-5 Camo Stock
- Three Invector DS Choke Tubes (F,M,IC)
- Vent Rib
- Recoil Operated Kinematic Drive

BROWNING



Citori 725 Field

Item #: **0135303004**
 Caliber: **12 Gauge**
 Sights: **Ivory Front and Mid Bead**
 Capacity: **2**
 BBL: **28"**

- Blue Finish
- Grade II/III Walnut Stock
- Three Invector DS Choke Tubes (F,M,IC)
- High Relief Engraving
- Ventilated Top Rib
- Mechanical Trigger System

BERETTA



686 Silver Pigeon 1 Combo 2-Barrel Set

Item #: **J6863P8**
 Caliber: **20 Gauge|28 Gauge**
 Sights: **Metal Bead Front**
 Capacity: **2**
 BBL: **28"**

- Blue Barrels, Nickel Plated Receiver
- Checkered Walnut Stock
- MobilChoke (Full, IM, Mod, IC, Cyl)
- Single Selective Trigger
- Flat 1/4x1/4 Vent Rib
- Gold Plated Trigger

BERETTA



A400 Xplor Action KO

Item #: **J40AK18**
 Caliber: **12 Gauge**
 Sights: **Red Fiber Optic**
 Capacity: **3+1**
 BBL: **28"**

- Blued Barrel, Bronze Toned Receiver
- Xtra-Grain Technology Stock
- Kick-Off Stock System
- Optima HP Field Chokes (Full, Mod, IC)
- Adjustable Stock Shim System
- Gas Operated w/ Compensating Valve

**ESCORT
SHOTGUNS**



M87 Pump

Item #: **HAT871228**
 Caliber: **12 Gauge**
 Sights: **Fiber Optic Front**
 Capacity: **4+1**
 BBL: **28"**

- Matte Black Finish
- Turkish Walnut Stock
- Multi-Choke (Full, Mod, IC, IM, Skeet)
- Large Slide Release Button
- Sling Swivel Studs

**ESCORT
SHOTGUNS**



Escort Youth

Item #: **HAT215YOTE**
 Caliber: **20 Gauge**
 Sights: **Fiber Optic Front**
 Capacity: **4+1**
 BBL: **22"**

- YOTE Camo Finish
- YOTE Camo Synthetic Stock
- Multi-Choke (Full, Mod, IC)
- FAST Loading System
- SMART Valve Piston Regulator
- 12.5 Length of Pull

MOSSBERG



Model 500 Waterfowl Duck Commander

Item #: **52281**
 Caliber: **12 Gauge**
 Sights: **TRUGLO TRU-BEAD Fiber Optic Front**
 Capacity: **5+1**
 BBL: **28"**

- Realtree Max-5 Camo Finish
- Realtree Max-5 Camo Stock with Engraved Duck Commander Logo
- Multi-Choke (Full, Mod, IC)
- American Flag Bandana

Remington



870 Express Compact

Item #: **81150**
 Caliber: **20 Gauge**
 Sights: **Front Bead**
 Capacity: **4+1**
 BBL: **21"**

- Matte Black Finish
- Mossy Oak Pink Blaze Camo Stock and Fore-End
- Multi-Choke (Mod)
- Vent Rib
- 13" Length of Pull

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SA-08 Deluxe

Item #: **SA08D2826PGM**
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 Sights: **Bead**
 Capacity: **5+1**
 BBL: **26"**

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- Gloss Finished Walnut Stock
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- Dual Valve System

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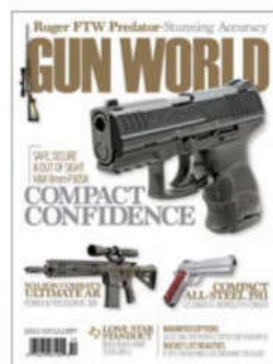
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GUN WORLD

Dinosaurs and Design

► BY CRAIG HODGKINS

OCCASIONALLY, DESPITE MY WRITING AND EDITING responsibilities with this and other magazines, I can sneak away to do some fun stuff.

Recently, I visited Bozeman, Montana to test some lasers, visit an excellent museum, watch a movie premiere, and fly fish on Depuy's Spring Creek.

In the end, I was able to do it all but the fly fishing. I flew home early to bask in the vicarious glory of my daughter's high school graduation speech, a "can't miss" evening of another kind.

Normally, there's no need for me to leave California just to catch a new movie, but because Universal Studios has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the Paleontology Department at Montana State University, the premiere of *Jurassic World* that we attended was a fundraiser for the Museum of the Rockies. We spent the whole morning at the museum, which boasts a truly breath-taking collection of ancient reptiles and amphibians.

Their exhibit on the history of chocolate was pretty cool as well.

Crimson Trace—our gracious hosts for the entire event—also facilitated one of the more memorable scenes in the film (especially in 3-D), as a small army of tactical personnel chased down the (spoiler alert!) pack of escaped velociraptors at night, lasers crisscrossing through the jungle foliage.

As always, I came away from the trip with a renewed respect for the industry, and made some new friends.

Closer to home, you'll notice that this issue of *Gun World* looks a bit different than before. We receive feedback in a variety of ways—from letters, emails and phone calls to posts and messages on our social media sites—and our updated design is the result of a few of those requests.

On behalf of the *Gun World* team, thank you for your support. I look forward to hearing from you, reading your posts on our social media sites (see the box below), and seeing you at some upcoming shows and events.

And if we're careful, we won't get chased by any fleeing velociraptors.

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GUN WORLD

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief: Craig Hodgkins
Managing Editor: Mark Heisser
Senior Creative Director: Eric Knagg
Art Director: Johann Frederick Mendoza

CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Paul Barlow, Aaron Carter, Mike Dickerson, Brad Fitzpatrick, Paul Hantke, James House, Phil Massaro, Jameson Parker, D.K. Pridgen, John Raguso, Steve Sieberts, Dave Spaulding, Tim Stetzer, Tom Tabor, Leroy Thompson, Martin Topper, Dave Workman

ADVERTISING

Ad Sales Director: Gabe Frimmel
(714) 200-1930 Gfrimmel@EngagedMediaInc.com
Senior Account Executive: Casey Clifford
(714) 200-1982
Senior Account Executive: Mark Pack
(714) 200-1939
Ad Traffic Coordinator: Jennifer Merriday

DIRECT MARKETING GROUP

John Bartulin (866) 866-5146 ext. 2746

OPERATIONS

Newsstand Sales & Marketing Manager: Gus Alonzo
Newsstand Analyst: Celia Merriday
Newsstand & Production Analyst: Harsh Srivastava
Creative Graphic Designer: John Cabral

EDITORIAL, PRODUCTION & SALES OFFICE

22840 Savi Ranch Parkway, #200
Yorba Linda, CA 92887
(714) 939-9991
www.gunworld.com
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Engaged Media Inc.
4635 McEwen Road, Dallas, TX 75244

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(800) 764-6278
(239) 653-0225 Foreign Inquiries
subscriptions@engagedmediainc.com
customerservice@engagedmediainc.com

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Dealer Sales: (239) 280-2380
New Products or to Contribute a Story or Photo
chodgkins@engagedmediainc.com

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Executive Director: Nick Singh
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Shockwave Technologies Blade Pistol Stabilizer

AS THE MARKET FOR PISTOL VERSIONS OF POPULAR RIFLES AND SUBGUNS GROWS, SO DOES THE AFTERMARKET SUPPORTING THEM



► TEXT & PHOTOS BY TIM STETZER

PISTOL VERSIONS OF RIFLES and subguns are quite popular these days with new models popping up almost daily. While quite compact, most are still moderately heavy, at least in comparison to a more conventional handgun, so having something to help support that weight is a welcome addition for many shooters.

Pistol braces have taken this part of the market by storm, so it was inevitable that we would start to see some other options pop up on the market and I had the chance to work with one recently — the Blade Pistol Stabilizer from Shockwave Technologies.

The Blade Stabilizer

The Shockwave Tech Blade Stabilizer differs from others on the market in both construction and operation. The fin-shaped blade is reminiscent of an M4-style buttstock but has simpler, cleaner lines.

The Blade is made from a rigid “high-strength glass-



reinforced polymer” and is available in black, grey, flat dark earth and OD green. Weight is a feathery five ounces, so you aren’t adding much heft to your already slightly portly pistol and the overall profile of the Blade is thin, which minimizes bulk.

The Stabilizer will fit any standard AR-style pistol buffer tube up to 1.25 inches in diameter and there’s a specially designed tube from KAK Industries made specifically for the Blade should you want to do a dedicated build. The KAK tube is the optimal diameter for the Blade and has a series of detents that allow you to lock the blade down at the proper length for your arm. The Blade Pistol Stabilizer is veteran designed, engineered and marketed and is made in the USA.

Installation and Usage

Installation of the Pistol Stabilizer is extremely fast and easy. Just slide the Blade onto your buffer tube and tighten down the Allen head set screw to fix it in place. If you want to protect the finish of your tube, or

if your buffer tube happens to be smaller than the preferred 1.25 inches of the KAK tube, simply wrap some 90 mile an hour tape or Gaffer’s tape around your tube to protect it and/or make up the size difference so there’s no slop.

I added the Blade to the CMMK MK4 K I’ve been using lately and found that its tube was slightly undersized for the stabilizer, so I did just that. I adjusted it so it hits just inside my forearm, a bit forward from the bend of my elbow. You can also cant the Blade slightly to more comfortably rest on your forearm and provide support for the weight of the pistol if you like.

One of the key points to remember with the Pistol Stabilizer is that it is NOT a buttstock. It’s not designed as one, it isn’t intended to be one, and BATF changed their minds earlier this year and said you can’t use it as one.

While in use, the Blade rests against your forearm and takes some of the weight off of your hand to help keep that massive 6-pound pistol you’re using steady

The Blade Pistol Stabilizer from Shockwave Technologies is a rigid polymer fin designed to help steady your big buffer tube equipped pistols.

Contact

Shockwave Technologies
(801) 815-5178
ShockWaveTechnologies.com

when you're rocking it out Terminator-style at the range. It actually reminds me a lot of the old 5.56mm Bushmaster Arm Pistol from the 80s if you recall those. It was a bullpup pistol where the magazine rested alongside the user's forearm. The Blade is based on essentially the same concept.

One of the things I like about the Blade is that it's fast to transition from the arm supported position to an eye-level cheek weld; just make sure you keep the brace off of your shoulder! It's also very easy to get to the controls and make reloads since your arm is free. However, if you prefer the added stability of having your arm strapped in, there are a number of slots on the Blade where you can connect a Velcro strap to snug the Stabilizer down to your forearm.

I'm personally a big fan of these monster-sized pistols like the various AR platforms, the CZ Scorpion EVO 3 S1, the SIG MPX-P and others. They're a lot of fun to shoot and I think the various braces improve both the looks and the function of this class of firearm.

Healthy competition in the marketplace is generally a good thing for the consumer who wants options and it helps keep the competing companies on their toes and innovating, so I was glad to see the Shockwave Tech Blade hit the market. It's a different approach to the stabilizer concept and a good option to consider.

The Blade Pistol Stabilizer can be bought directly from Shockwave Technologies for \$49.95. The basic KAK tube can be purchased separately for \$20, as a kit with the buffer, spring, endplate and castle nut for \$50, or as a set with both a Blade Stabilizer and all of the KAK tube parts for \$95. **CW**



The Pistol Stabilizer will fit buffer tubes up to 1.25 inches in diameter and its length can be adjusted to the user's preference. It has a number of slots that can be used to mount a sling or to run a strap through to more securely attach the brace to your arm, should you so choose.



The Blade is very easy to install. Simply slide it to the desired position on your buffer tube and tighten down the set screw to keep it in place.



The author set his Blade Stabilizer up so that it rested on his inner forearm, just forward of the bend in the elbow.

Gunfighter Stock from Bravo Company

If you're seeking a strong lightweight polymer stock for your mil-spec receiver extension, Bravo Company has recently released their new Gunfighter Stock. Weighing in at just over seven ounces, it features a new patent pending latch and is designed slick and snag-free to prevent potential tangling with the end-user's sling, pouches, webbing or other gear.

The stock comes with only five parts and one screw, allowing for future stock options and configurations. In addition, each stock is capped with an integrated, color matched rubber butt pad for secure placement in the shoulder pocket as well as increased

overall durability.

The latch is made from heat-treated ordnance grade steel, and is flat on all sides to ensure the stock interface with the receiver extension cannot be obstructed by dirt or debris. Should an end-user need to run with their sling off, such as in a vehicle, the stock includes a VBOST (Vehicle Borne Operations Sling Tab). This removable tab interfaces with the shooter's riggers band or bungee to secure the shooter's sling against the stock when the carbine is not in use.

The stock comes with both ambidextrous QD swivel sockets as well as a conventional sling attachment slot, and is available in four colors: Black, Flat Dark Earth, Foliage Green and Wolf Gray.

Bravo Company's new Gunfighter Stock is lightweight, easy to install, and comes in a variety of colors.

(Henry DeKuyper photo)



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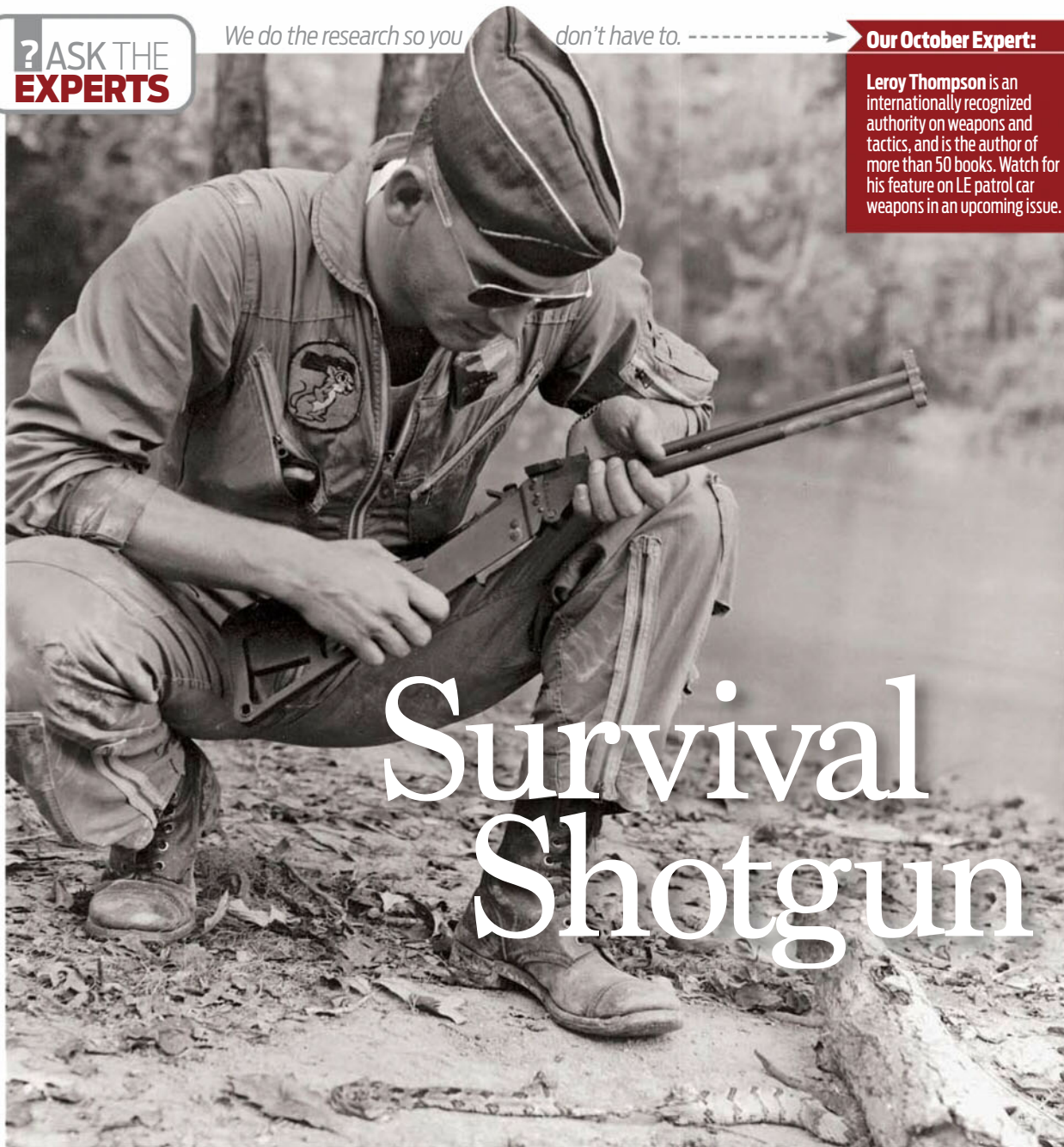
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Leroy Thompson is an internationally recognized authority on weapons and tactics, and is the author of more than 50 books. Watch for his feature on LE patrol car weapons in an upcoming issue.



Survival Shotgun

► BY GUN WORLD CONTRIBUTORS

Q **UESTION:** An uncle of mine, now deceased, was a bomber pilot during the Cold War and once told me that they carried an over and under shotgun on their aircraft for survival purposes. What shotgun did he carry?

Tony B., Agoura Hills, CA

Leroy Thompson Answers: Your uncle was probably referring to the M6 Aircrew Survival Weapon, which

was a combination rifle/shotgun. It had a rifle barrel chambered for the .22 Hornet cartridge above a shotgun barrel chambered for the .410 shotgun shell. The M6 was designed for compactness with a 14-inch barrel and the ability to fold to an overall length of only 15 inches. Today, that makes this a short-barreled rifle by NFA (National Firearms Act) standards.

Collectors should beware of purchasing an M6, as very few of them were ever NFA registered. The stock was designed to store nine .22 Hor-

net rounds and four .410 shotgun rounds. USAF M6s were produced by the Ithaca Gun Company.

Harrington and Richardson also designed an M4 Survival Rifle to fit under the seat of U. S. aircraft, and I have read that it was originally developed during the World War II era. It had a 4-round detachable magazine and was also chambered for the .22 Hornet.

As with the M6, the barrel was only 14 inches, making the M4 an NFA weapon. It was replaced by the M6 during the 1950s. **GW**

A USAF pilot with his M6 Aircrew Survival Weapon, which seems to have just been used to dispatch a snake.

(Photo Courtesy of NARA)



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► TEXT & PHOTOS BY MIKE DICKERSON

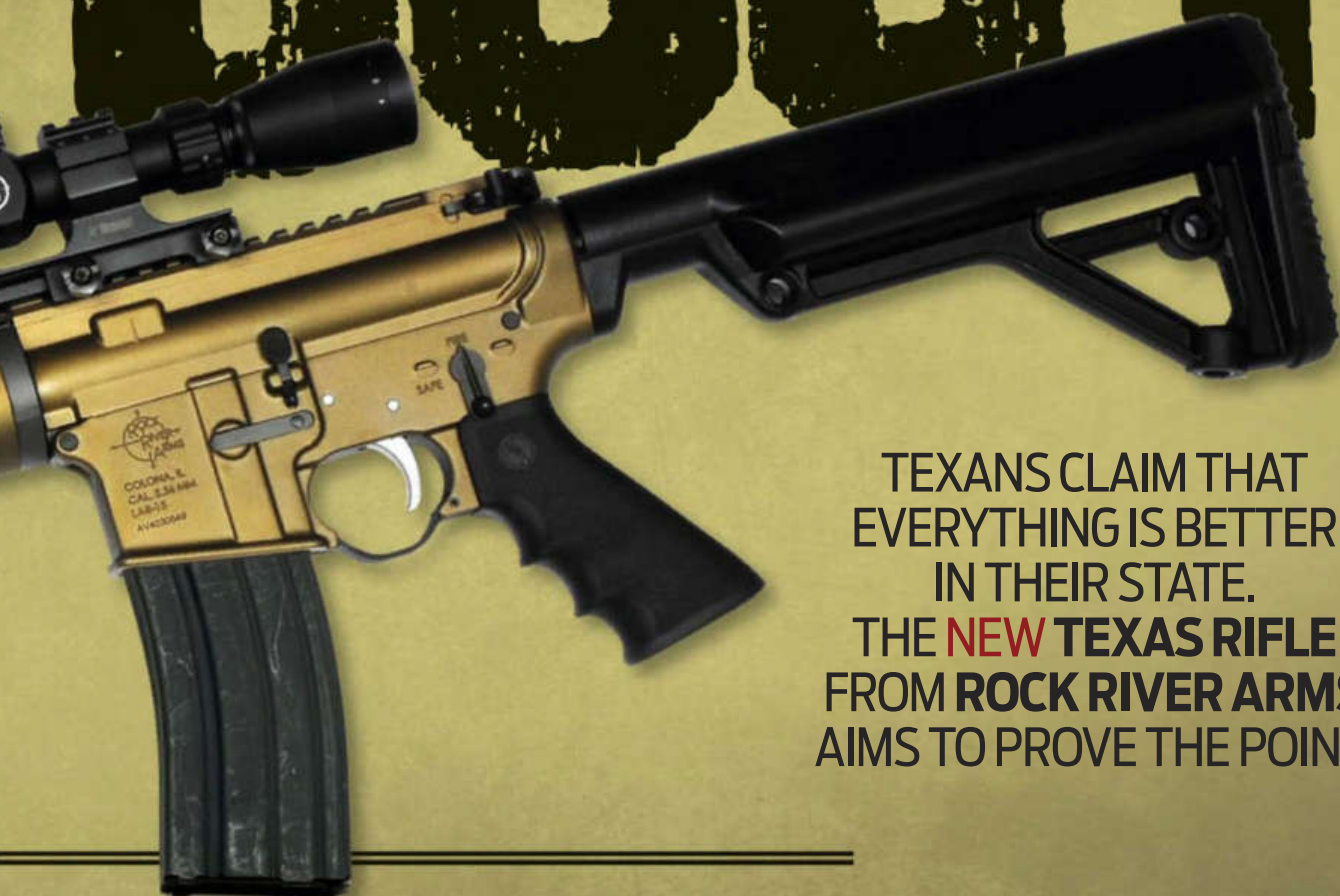
EVERYTHING IN AND ABOUT TEXAS IS BIGGER, better and bolder than any place else — and if you doubt that, just ask a Texan. Even a transplanted Texan like myself knows that if you add the word “Texas” to anything, it automatically makes it better.

This apparently applies to firearms as well, as evidenced by that fact that Rock River Arms is now offering Texans and wannabe Texans (meaning everyone else), an opportunity to show off their Texas pride with a special version of RRA’s LAR-15 rifle, chambered for 5.56 NATO or .223 Rem.

It is called, appropriately enough, the Texas Rifle.

Visually, the rifle is a stunner. At the gun store counter, it stands out like a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader in a convent. The extra-long handguard

DOUBT



TEXANS CLAIM THAT
EVERYTHING IS BETTER
IN THEIR STATE.
THE **NEW** TEXAS RIFLE
FROM **ROCK RIVER ARMS**
AIMS TO PROVE THE POINT.

and upper and lower receivers wear a protective Cerakote finish in your choice of Barrett bronze, burnt bronze or Magpul flat dark earth. The finish on the test rifle sent to us, in burnt bronze, was well executed, and contrasted nicely with the black furniture and black Cerakote-finished barrel.

The right side of the magazine well shows the outline of the shape of the state of Texas surrounding a lone star. In case you happen to miss that, both sides of the free-float rail handguard have cutouts repeating this pattern, with longitudinal cutouts radiating fore and aft. The underside of the handguard has cutouts spelling the word Texas, with the “T” in the shape of a longhorn. There’s a lone star atop the muzzle brake, and another one recessed into the terminal end of the brake.

While the rifle looks great on the outside, it’s what’s on the inside — and the way the rifle performs — that’s likely to make you boot-scootin’ happy.



FIRST 'STATE' RIFLE

Rock River Arms is a relatively old soldier in the AR-manufacturing business. Since its inception, the company has established a well-earned reputation for building accurate and durable rifles, and also for giving the consumer what they want. "We catalogue over a hundred models," says Steve Mayer, Rock River Arms' director of law enforcement and product development, "but we can also upgrade most of them, to order, at time of build, so those hundreds of models literally can lead to millions of possible configurations."

For that reason, it's noteworthy when the company brings out a new model, and doubly so for one that represents such a departure from the standard black rifle. So why a Texas Rifle?

"Texas has a strong tradition of weapons ownership and use, and has been the home of many superb riflemen over the years," says Mayer. "We started what may be a string of 'state' rifles with the Texas Rifle."

The Texas Rifle's upper and lower re-

ceivers are forged from 7075 T6 aluminum, which is the strongest of the 7075 alloys. The upper is an A4 flattop variation with a full-length Picatinny rail that extends along the upper length of the RRA extra-long, free-float handguard, paired with a low-profile gas block. (Should you be entertaining thoughts of building your own version of the Texas Rifle, it's worth noting that the Texas Rifle handguard and other parts specific to this model are not available separately).

The bolt and bolt carrier are made from the familiar MIL-SPEC materials of Carpenter 158 steel and 8620 steel, respectively.

The 16-in. barrel is made of 416R stainless steel, which is often used in precision match-grade barrels. It is fluted, which helps the rifle achieve an overall weight of 7 lbs. 6 oz., and has a 1:8 twist. While this relatively fast twist should work well with heavier bullets, it also has a tendency to work well with just about everything else.

That's especially true when it's

"VISUALLY, THE RIFLE IS A STUNNER."

Left: The bottom side of the XL handguard has cutouts spelling "Texas," with the "T" in the shape of a longhorn.

Bottom: Cutouts in the handguard leave no doubt the rifle is intended to show off Texas pride.

Right: An imprint of the shape of the state of Texas, surrounding a lone star, adorns the right side of the magazine well.



matched up with a .223 Wylde chamber, originally designed as a match chambering for semi-automatic rifles. It allows the LAR-15 to handle pressures from both 5.56 NATO and .223 Rem. ammunition with no worries. You can safely shoot either round in the rifle.

The chrome-plated trigger that comes with the Texas Rifle is a varmint version of Rock River Arms' standard two-stage trigger. Most of RRA's production rifles come with a two-stage trigger with a standard pull weight of 4.5-5 lbs. Models designed for hunting come with a lighter 3.5-

lb. trigger. The one on our test rifle had a light initial take-up, and broke cleanly at an average pull weight of 3lbs. 3 oz.

The barrel, trigger, chamber and free-float handguard should all combine to give this rifle pretty solid accuracy potential, and that's reflected in RRA's guarantee that the rifle is capable of shooting $\frac{3}{4}$ MOA, or 0.75 in., at 100 yards. Did it perform up to that standard? We'll let you know in a bit, but first, here's a closer look at some things that make this rifle stand out from the herd.



A proprietary, tuned and ported muzzle brake, adorned with lone stars, did a good job of mitigating recoil and muzzle rise.



Stock options on the Texas Rifle include the RRA Operator A2 stock (pictured) and the collapsible RRA CAR A2 stock.

NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE

One part that often gets overlooked in choosing an AR platform is the charging handle, and you can tell a lot about a manufacturer by how much thought they put into choosing a handle for their rifles. In this case, Rock River Arms made an excellent choice in selecting the BCM Gunfighter charging handle. This is a stiff, beefy, oversized handle with an equally beefy latch that makes it easier to use one hand to charge the weapon without removing your firing hand from the fire controls. It's especially helpful when trying to clear malfunctions or charge the gun when a rifle scope may be somewhat in the way.

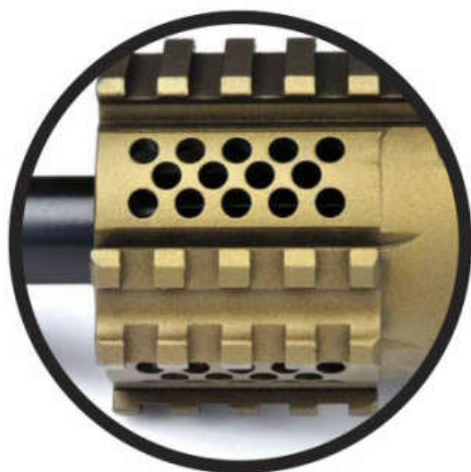
Another small but meaningful touch is the RRA Star Safety Selector. Once you realize it's there and become accustomed to it, you'll likely find it much easier to use under adverse conditions, including in the dark. "The raised central core is easy to identify by touch, and the shooter can follow the beam or ray out from it to the safe or fire position," says Mayer. "It's much easier to use in this manner than a standard safety."

The proprietary RRA tuned and ported muzzle brake on the Texas Rifle is another noteworthy feature. In my subjective judgment, it does a very good job of mitigating recoil and muzzle rise. Mayer attributes that to a lot of experimentation and learning by trial and error. "We started out with new brakes and compensators during the ban



The handguard and receiver of the rifle wear a protective Cerakote finish in your choice of Barrett bronze, burnt bronze or Magpul flat dark earth. RRA chose a Hogue rubber pistol grip.

The rifle is equipped with a standard forward assist.



In addition to the full-length Picatinny rail topside, there are shorter rails added at the cardinal points of the handguard.

when flash suppressors were largely out of the picture, and we kept developing them after the ban expired,” he said. “We’ve learned a lot about what makes a good brake versus just a good-looking brake. We’re all about function, and then making it into a decent-looking product.”

Note that the brake is intended to be a permanent fixture, and removal may damage the gun and void the warranty. Removal should be done only by the factory, according to RRA.

The Texas Rifle comes equipped with a Hogue rubber pistol grip, but you can choose between two available stocks. The first is the RRA Operator A2 stock, which is a full-length, rifle-style stock. Compared to a regular A2 stock, it provides an adjustable buttplate or pad, battery storage and enhanced cheek

weld. This is the stock which came on our review rifle, and I liked the feel of it. You can also choose RRA’s CAR A2 stock, a six-position, collapsible stock which offers the same enhancements as the Operator A2 stock.

While the Texas Rifle may seem a tad indulgent to some, don’t let its looks fool you. This RRA LAR-15 platform is well thought out, and components have been selected with an eye toward no-nonsense functionality.

ACCURATE AND DURABLE

For testing, I paired the Texas Rifle with a Leupold Mark AR Mod-1 3-9X40 mm scope mounted into a Burris PEPR mount. This is my go-to setup for wringing maximum accuracy out of AR-style rifles, and it has yet to let me down in any way.

The bolt and bolt carrier are made of MIL-SPEC Carpenter 158 steel and 8620 steel, respectively.



The Rock River Arms Texas Rifle is the first of what may become a line of rifles honoring specific states.

“THE EVEN BETTER NEWS IS THAT THE RIFLE WASN'T VERY FINICKY ABOUT AMMO.”

CONTACT

Black Hills Ammunition
Black-Hills.com

Burris Optics
BurrisOptics.com

Competitive Edge Dynamics
CEDhk.com

Federal Ammunition
FederalPremium.com

Hornady Ammunition
Hornady.com

Leupold
Leupold.com

Nagel's Gun Shop
NagelsGuns.net

Rock River Arms
RockRiverArms.com

Winchester Ammunition
Winchester.com

The rifle is equipped with a 16-in. black Cerakoted stainless steel barrel with a 1:8 twist.

I ran six different factory loads over my CED M2 chronograph and shot several groups with each load to test the rifle's accuracy. The factory loads employed bullets ranging from a 77-gr. open-tip match bullet to a 50-gr. fragmenting bullet, with several stops in between. I also fired several rapid-fire strings to make sure everything functioned as it should.

As is my usual practice, I did not oil or clean the gun prior to testing, apart from running a dry patch through the bore, because I wanted to duplicate a buyer's experience in shooting a gun straight from the box. This can get iffy in the case of ARs, which may express displeasure if run dirty and dry for very long, but

the Texas Rifle cycled perfectly, with zero issues, in the course of digesting a couple hundred rounds.

Of course, you would expect to sacrifice some velocity out of a 16-in. barrel, and that proved to be the case in all but one instance. The heaviest bullet tested, a Black Hills 5.56 NATO 77-gr. OTM load, stepped out at 2747 fps, which is only three fps slower than factory-advertised velocity.

Velocities in all other tested loads ran anywhere from 282 fps to 353 fps slower than factory-claimed velocities, but that's hardly surprising since many of those factory loads are tested out of 24-in. barrels. One of them was Hornady's .223 Rem. 55-gr. Varmint Express V-MAX load, which



The chrome-plated trigger is a varmint version of RRA's two-stage trigger. The one on our test rifle broke cleanly at 3 lbs., 3oz.

showed the greatest drop in velocity from factory numbers, but was still plenty fast at 2887 fps. That round also turned in a stellar performance in terms of accuracy, as you'll see in a moment.

Accuracy testing was a bit challenging at times due to the wind, which varied from 5–17 mph on the day of testing. In spite of this, the Texas Rifle delivered the goods. Four of the six tested loads turned in best groups that met or did better than RRA's $\frac{3}{4}$ MOA accuracy guarantee. The 1:8 twist barrel shot the heaviest bullet well, as you would expect, sending the 77-gr. Black Hills OTM bullet into a best group of 0.72 in. and average groups of less than an inch. It also shot the Hornady Superformance Match .223 Rem. 75-gr. BTHP round well, with groups averaging 0.90 in. and a best group of 0.79 in.

That's the good news. The even better news is that the rifle wasn't very finicky about ammo. The gun shot some of the lighter bullets as well or better than the heavier bullets. In fact, the best performance of all tested rounds was turned in by Hornady's .223 Rem. 55-gr. Varmint Express V-MAX load, which produced average groups of just 0.68 in. and a best group of 0.54 in. The average size of all best groups was just 0.80 in. If you removed the worst-performing load from this equation (even though it still shot perfectly acceptable groups measuring slightly over one inch), the average size of best groups magically shrinks to just 0.73 in.

Thanks to its striking aesthetics, the Texas Rifle is a gun any Texan would be proud to show off at the BBQ. Of course, you may also want to show it off at the range, because it shoots as good as it looks.

If the defenders of the Alamo had been equipped with this rifle, history might well have taken a very different turn. **GW**



The burnt bronze Cerakote finish on the test rifle contrasted nicely with the black furniture and chrome-plated trigger.



*"RRA MADE AN
EXCELLENT CHOICE
IN SELECTING THE
BCM GUNFIGHTER
CHARGING HANDLE."*



Left: The author put the Texas Rifle through its paces at the bench and found that it shoots as good as it looks.

Right: This group, fired with Federal's .223 Rem 55-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip ammo, shows the type of accuracy you can expect from the Texas Rifle.



For testing, the author mounted a Leupold AR Mod-1 3-9X40 mm scope in a Burris PEPR mount.



LONE STAR STANDOUT

ROCK RIVER ARMS LAR-15 TEXAS RIFLE 5.56/223

LOAD	AVG. MUZZLE VELOCITY (FPS)	AVG. 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)	BEST 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)
Black Hills 5.56 mm 77 gr. OTM	2747	0.91	0.72
Federal Premium Tactical .223 55 gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip	2899	1.05	0.77
Federal Power Shok .223 64 gr. Soft Point	2717	1.17	1.16
Hornady Superformance Match .223 75 gr. BTHP	2609	0.90	0.79
Hornady Varmint Express .223 55 gr. V-MAX	2887	0.68	0.54
Winchester Ballistic Silvertip .223 50 gr. fragmenting polymer tip	3128	1.17	0.86

Note: Velocities measured with Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph. All groups fired in wind measuring 5-17 mph.

SPECIFICATIONS

Rock River Arms Texas Rifle

Action: Gas-operated, direct impingement semi-auto

Caliber: 5.56 NATO and .223 Rem.

Barrel: 16 in., fluted, Cerakoted Stainless, 1:8 twist

Handguard: RRA XL free float rail handguard

Furniture: Hogue rubber pistol grip

Stock: RRA Operator A2 stock or RRA CAR A2 stock

Charging Handle: BCM Gunfighter

Muzzle Brake: RRA tuned and ported brake, 1/2 - 28

Weight: 7.6 pounds

Gas block: Low profile

MSRP: \$1,700.00



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The GT Monolith Stinger proved to be fast and accurate when engaging multiple targets at close range.





All-Steel Stinger

LES BAER'S NEW GT MONOLITH STINGER IS A COMPACT 1911 WITH MORE THAN A DOZEN ENHANCEMENTS AND FULL-SIZE RECOIL CONTROL

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY: DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER

LES BAER'S 1911s are known for innovation and performance, and the new Baer GT Monolith Stinger scores high on both accounts. This concealable all-steel 1911 performs well and looks good doing it.

Innovative Design

The GT Monolith Stinger combines design features of two of Les Baer's 1911s, mating a Commander's length 4.25-inch barrel with an Officer's length grip frame. The

Stinger is a handy gun that carries very easily in an inside-the-waistband holster and doesn't dig into the car seat while you're driving. In addition, the Stinger's shortened grip is less likely to print through clothing. The net result is a pistol that seems to disappear, even under a light shirt.

This concealment benefit doesn't come without a trade-off. The shorter barrel and slide reduce recoil-controlling weight, and the shorter grip gives the shooting hand a somewhat reduced purchase on the gun.



*"...THIS PISTOL
HAS EVERY
FEATURE
SOMEONE
COULD WANT IN
A REDUCED-SIZE
PERSONAL
DEFENSE 1911."*

The deluxe checkered cocobolo grips on the Monolith Stinger were attractive and provided a solid hold.

For those who want less recoil from the Stinger and still want to shoot a heavier recoiling .45, Les modified the Stinger by adding a heavier Monolith frame, which extends the full width of the dust cover to the end of the slide and adds two ounces at the muzzle end of the gun.

This doesn't seem like much, but anyone who shoots Bullseye Matches can tell you that adding even a little weight to the end of the barrel makes the pistol feel more muzzle heavy and reduces recoil. The end result is a compact 1911 that recoils more like a full-size gun. For those who still want more recoil reduction, the Monolith Stinger is also available in .38 Super.

I'm a .45 ACP fan, however, so I requested one of those for testing.

Improved Performance

Like all Baer guns sent to me at the Florida Gun Exchange, the Monolith Stinger includes a selection of custom features that improve the performance of the 1911 design. Enhancements on this new pistol include modifications to the slide, barrel and frame. Slide modifications include hand fitting the slide to the frame, a lowered and flared ejection port, a tuned and polished extractor and a set of Rolo adjustable night sights.

Enhancements on the Baer Match barrel include a throated and polished feedramp and a recessed crown to protect the rifling. The frame's custom features include extended ambidextrous manual safety levers, a checkered slide stop, a Baer



Custom controls like a raised magazine release, checkered slide stop and lightened long trigger enhance the tactical utility of the new Baer pistol.



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deluxe Commander hammer and sear, a Baer beavertail grip safety with a memory pad, a flat serrated mainspring housing, a 30 lpi checkered front strap, a long trigger, a beveled magazine well and a set of checkered cocobolo grips.

Finally, the model I received for evaluation has an additional-cost hard chrome finish that's very attractive. Put it all together and this pistol has every feature someone could want in a reduced-size personal defense 1911.

Because the pistol has a full-length dust cover, it has a different field stripping procedure. There is not enough room to use a bushing wrench to turn the bushing and relieve tension on the recoil spring.

After checking that the gun is unloaded one must remove the slide stop and carefully let the slide come forward off of the frame while taking care to keep the recoil spring in place. Then the recoil spring, recoil spring guide and plug can be removed as one unit before the barrel bushing is turned and the barrel is removed through the front of the slide.

Reassembly requires the spring, guide and plug to be assembled into the slide and then, while carefully keeping the spring in place, the slide can be slowly mounted on the frame and the slide stop reinstalled. Because the recoil spring is under tension, one should always wear safety glasses when disassembling or assembling any 1911.

Close internal and external examination of the pistol indicated that there were no poorly conformed parts, tool marks, unfinished metal areas or problems with fit anywhere on the gun. Like all Baer guns I have tested, fitting was precise and firm pressure was required to rack the slide. Both of the premium Stinger magazines that came with the gun locked securely in the magazine well and ejected smartly when the magazine release was pressed.

All Baer Monolith pistols have a full-length dust cover that adds weight to the muzzle to reduce recoil.



"THE STINGER IS A HANDY GUN THAT CARRIES VERY EASILY IN AN INSIDE-THE-WAISTBAND HOLSTER..."

The pistol's Commander hammer fits securely in the upswept beavertail grip safety and prevents "hammer bite" on the web of the shooter's gun hand.



Finally, the engagement of the hammer and sear were precise, all safeties worked and the trigger broke very cleanly at a little over four pounds. This precision and fit is exactly what I expected from a pistol that retails for \$3,315.

Range Time

The GT Monolith Stinger was live fire tested at the Flagler Gun Club's Bullseye and Action Ranges. Five loads were tested for velocity and accuracy. They included Black



The Monolith Stinger's magazine well is beveled for quick reloads.



The pistol's rear Rolo night sight has Trijicon lamps and is fully-adjustable for windage and elevation.

Hills' 230-grain JRN, Federal's 230-grain Hydra-Shok JHP, Freedom Munitions' 230-grain Hush JRN, HPR's 150-grain Black Ops Fragmenting JHP, and PolyCase's Inceptor 114-grain ARX Polymer/Copper bullet load. In addition, Remington's 230-grain JHP load was used to run timed drills, and Freedom Arms' Hush load was used to shoot the Army L segment of the Flagler Club's weekly informal Bullseye Match.

Accuracy testing was conducted from the bench at 15 yards using an MTM Front Sight rifle rest and Leupold Kenai spotting scope. The Monolith Stinger is capable of shooting accurately at longer distances, but it is primarily a defense gun and most gunfights take place close range.

Black Hills' 230-grain JRN was the most accurate with a three five-shot group average of 2.01 inches, and HPR's 150-grain Black Ops load had the smallest single five-shot group which measured 1.47 inches. Overall average 15-yard group size for all five loads combined was 2.7 inches, which is more than adequate for tactical purposes.

Complete results are in the table on page 32.

The velocities recorded from the Monolith Stinger's 4.25-inch barrel were not much less than what one

would expect from a 5-inch gun. Federal's Hydra-Shok produced an average velocity of 862 fps. Factory ballistics list a nominal 900 fps from a 5-inch barrel. Even at 862 fps the Hydra-Shok generates 380 ft-lbs of energy, which is more than enough to make the bullet expand and penetrate the desired 12 inches in 10% ballistic gelatin.

As for the two lightweight rounds, the PolyCase 114-grain ARX left the muzzle at an average of 1233 fps for 385 ft-lbs of energy and the HPR 150-grain Black Ops bullet had an average muzzle velocity of 1127 fps and 423 ft-lbs of muzzle energy.


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The muzzle of the pistol's Baer Match barrel is recessed to protect the rifling.

Thirty lines-per-inch checkering on the front strap was well executed.

"...THE MONOLITH STINGER FUNCTIONED PERFECTLY WITH ALL OF THE AMMUNITION FIRED."

Lastly, the Black Hills 230-grain JRN load produced 849 fps and the Freedom Munitions 230-grain JRN Hush ammo left the muzzle at 778 fps. Each of these are within the performance envelope for a full-size .45.

Running a Course

Bench testing is important, but the real test of a pistol is how it performs in the shooter's hands. I shot the Army L Course with the Monolith Stinger during two Bullseye Matches at the Flagler Club. The rapid-fire stage of the course calls for two five-shot strings fired at a 15-yard target in 11 seconds each. I used a two-hand isosceles grip and my scores for rapid fire were 95-3X and 96-3X. This compares quite well with other handguns that I've used to shoot the Army L rapid-fire stage.

Bullseye rapid fire indicates how well a pistol can perform under time constraints. However, tactical drills are a better indicator of a handgun's shootability because they begin with a random beep from a timer, involve multiple silhouette targets and start from the holster.

The drill used in this evaluation involved three targets on two stands set about 5 feet apart. The first target depicted one shooter standing behind the other and the second target showed one assailant standing in the open. In this drill, the fully exposed assailant depicted on the first target required two shots to the chest, the second assailant on target one received a single shot to the head and the single assailant on the second target got two shots to the head.

The drill was run twice at each of two distances. Average time for both 3-yard runs was 9.0 seconds and the total score for both runs was 95 out of a possible 100 points. Average time for the 10-yard runs was 11.25 seconds and the score was 65/100. All shots landed in vital areas of the targets.

Throughout all of the testing the Monolith Stinger functioned perfectly with all of the ammunition fired. Even so, a final function test was conducted at 15 yards. The gun was loaded to capacity with alternating ball and JHP ammo and was fired as fast as it was possible to aim at the target. There were no malfunctions even though the pistol was quite dirty and all eight shots were in a 3.5-inch group.

CONTACT

Black Hills Ammunition
605-348-5150
Black-Hills.com

Florida Gun Exchange
(386) 304-9499
FloridaGunExchange.com

Freedom Munitions
(208) 746-3668
FreedomMunitions.com

Federal Ammunition
FederalPremium.com

Flagler Gun and Hunt Club
FlaglerGunClub.com


HPR Ammunition
(928) 468-0223
HPRAmmo.com

Leupold and Stevens
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PolyCase Ammunition
(913) 335-5101
PolyCaseAmmo.com


Remington Ammunition
(800) 243-9700
Remington.com



Vertical striations on the mainspring housing kept the heel of the grip firmly in the shooter's hand during rapid fire.



Les Baer's new GT Monolith Stinger combines accuracy and shootability in a compact .45 automatic.



The .45-caliber Monolith Stinger is a carry gun that also performs well when target shooting.



Outstanding Performance

The GT Monolith Stinger is a good choice for the person who wants a compact 1911 that offers custom features and high quality, along with reliability, concealability and recoil reduction. The 1911 may have been designed in the early 1900s, but this Baer pistol clearly demonstrates why it is still a valid choice for concealed carry in the 21st Century. **GW**



PolyCase's new polymer/copper Inceptor ARX lightweight tactical bullet functioned well and produced light recoil in the new Baer pistol.

Les Baer's GT Monolith Stinger combines a Monolith Officer's frame with a Commander's slide to produce a compact and controllable 1911 for personal defense.

All-Steel Stinger

SPECIFICATIONS

Les Baer GT Monolith Stinger

Barrel: 4.25 inches

Frame: Steel

Finish: Hard Chrome (extra charge)

Weight: Approx. 35 oz.

Caliber: 45 ACP

Capacity: 8

Sights: Rolo Fully Adjustable Night

Sights

MSRP: **\$3015 (Blue),**
\$3315 (Hard Chrome)

Test Performance

Load Name	Velocity	Ave. Group	Best Group
Black Hills 230-gr. JRN	849 fps	2.01 inches	1.95 inches
Federal 230-gr. Hydra-Shok	862 fps	2.87 inches	2.59 inches
Freedom Munitions 230-gr. JRN	778 fps	3.25 inches	2.3 inches
HPR 150-gr. Black Ops	1127 fps	2.44 inches	1.47 inches
PolyCase 114-gr. Inceptor ARX	1233 fps	2.97 inches	2.55 inches

Five-shot groups fired at 15 yards from an MTM Front Sight rifle rest. Velocity data represents the average of five shots measured 10 feet from the muzzle with a Competition Electronics chronograph.

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Magnifying Your Options

Many optics work both for hunting close in and afar, but a single optic is typically not optimally suited for both.

SELECTING THE PERFECT OPTIC FOR YOUR RIFLE

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY AARON CARTER



Hunters looking for a top-notch, close-range hunting optic will find the Weaver Tactical 1-7X 24mm riflescope is among the best. It would be equally at home on a muzzleloader and slug gun, as well as a modern sporting rifle. Here the optic is atop a 7.62x39mm-chambered Rock River Arms LAR-47 X-1.

THE QUEST FOR A HUNTING OPTIC doesn't need to begin and end with the ubiquitous 3-9X riflescope. Although it may be successfully employed in the majority of big-game hunting scenarios, it isn't always ideal. So rather than settle for what is sufficient, choose an optic optimally suited for your given situation, taking into account the firearm, ammunition, average and maximum range shot distances, and lighting conditions, among other things.

Selecting the best optic isn't exactly rocket science, but the decision shouldn't be made haphazardly, either. Here are some factors to consider when contemplating your next purchase of short-range, mid-range and long-range optics.

Short-Range Optics

Despite notions to the contrary, the majority of big-game animals hunted east of the Mississippi and in the Corn Belt (mostly whitetail deer) are taken down at ranges inside of 150 yards; frequently at less than half that distance. The reasons are simple: laws, terrain, and flora.

In some states, such as Iowa and Illinois, hunting regulations prohibit the use of firearms other than muzzleloaders and/or shotguns for big-game hunting. Even with the newest sabot slugs and optimized twist rates, slug guns are still short-range affairs that perform their best inside of 150 yards. Sure, 200-yard shots are achievable, but doing so requires firearm and load familiarity garnered through practice, not studying ballistics charts.



Of the mid-range, "utilitarian" riflescopes, the 2.5-10X 40mm, such as this Bushnell Elite 4500, is among the author's favorites. It offers good low-end magnification, which enables it to excel at close range, and yet it permits hunting at extended ranges, too.



Here, the Tru-Glo Titan is mounted in the traditional position.



Primarily viewed as a "tactical" optic, the compact, lightweight Leupold Carbine Optic (LCO) would easily pull double-duty for hunting big game at close-range. Among other things, dot-style optics offer both-eyes-open shooting, immediate sighting and situational awareness.

The same can be said for muzzleloaders. Although the average modern muzzleloader provides better accuracy at distance than most slug guns, less-than-flat trajectory is still problematic. Moreover, whether you're sidehilling the Blue Ridge Mountains or creeping through swamps in Florida, Georgia, or South Carolina, terrain features and flora such as mountain laurel, briars, vines and ferns prevent long-distance targeting.

For these reasons, an optic that excels at close range, but can also permit 200-yard targeting, is preferable.

My personal preference is 3X magnification per 100 yards of anticipated maximum shot distance.

This translates to 3X at 100 yards, 6X at 200 yards, 9X at 300 yards, 12X at 400 yards, etc. It's not a hard-and-fast rule, but for me it has proven to be valid. Others might prefer 2X-magnification increases, so to each his own.

When hunting in locations where 100 yards is the greatest shot distance, 3X offers all the magnification you'll need, and at 150 yards 4-5X is plenty. For close-range hunting, I prefer a low-magnification, variable-power optic, such as a 1-4X, 1.5-5X, 1-6X, or 2-7X. Their larger fields of view at the lower end enable spotting, tracking, and engaging game at spitting distances while also providing reach when it's needed.

Although it's difficult to top a 1.5X to 2X scope at close range, the utilitarian 2.5-10X or 3-9X will also work, but remember to put the magnification setting on 2.5X or 3X when hunting in tight quarters or it'll cost you.

I favor models with a heavy, Duplex-style reticle or one that's illuminated via tritium, fiber-optic, battery, or some combination thereof. These features make the reticle easily visible in low-light conditions. Remember, darkness sets in faster in heavily wooded areas than in open ones.

Choosing an optic with a larger objective lens, which improves light transmission, can also improve sighting in diminished lighting. Scopes offering the features above (e.g. magnification range and reticle type), not to mention extra eye relief, are oftentimes labeled shotgun or muzzleloader models.

Perhaps the most misunderstood and underutilized optics for short-range hunting are the dot-style and reflex-style sights. Because these optics permit both-eyes-open shooting, there is increased situational awareness, which is especially beneficial if the shot comes fast, a follow-up shot is needed, or there are multiple animals. Positioning of the firearm is also less critical.

Thanks to manual or automatic rheostat adjustments, the red (or green, blue, etc.) dot is easy to see under various lighting conditions and the eye quickly proceeds to the dot, thereby quickening target engagement. This makes them great for organized drives and still-hunting.

I prefer models with the dot being 3.5 m.o.a. or smaller in size; 1-m.o.a. dots are perfect. Smaller dots enable more precise aiming, especially at longer-than-anticipated distances. There's no reason whatsoever that a practiced hunter couldn't cleanly take a big-game animal at 200 yards with a quality dot-style optic if the situation calls for such.

Speaking of quality, there are plenty of dot-style and reflex-style sights littering the marketplace that are of dubious construction. I suggest sticking with established brands that stand behind their product.

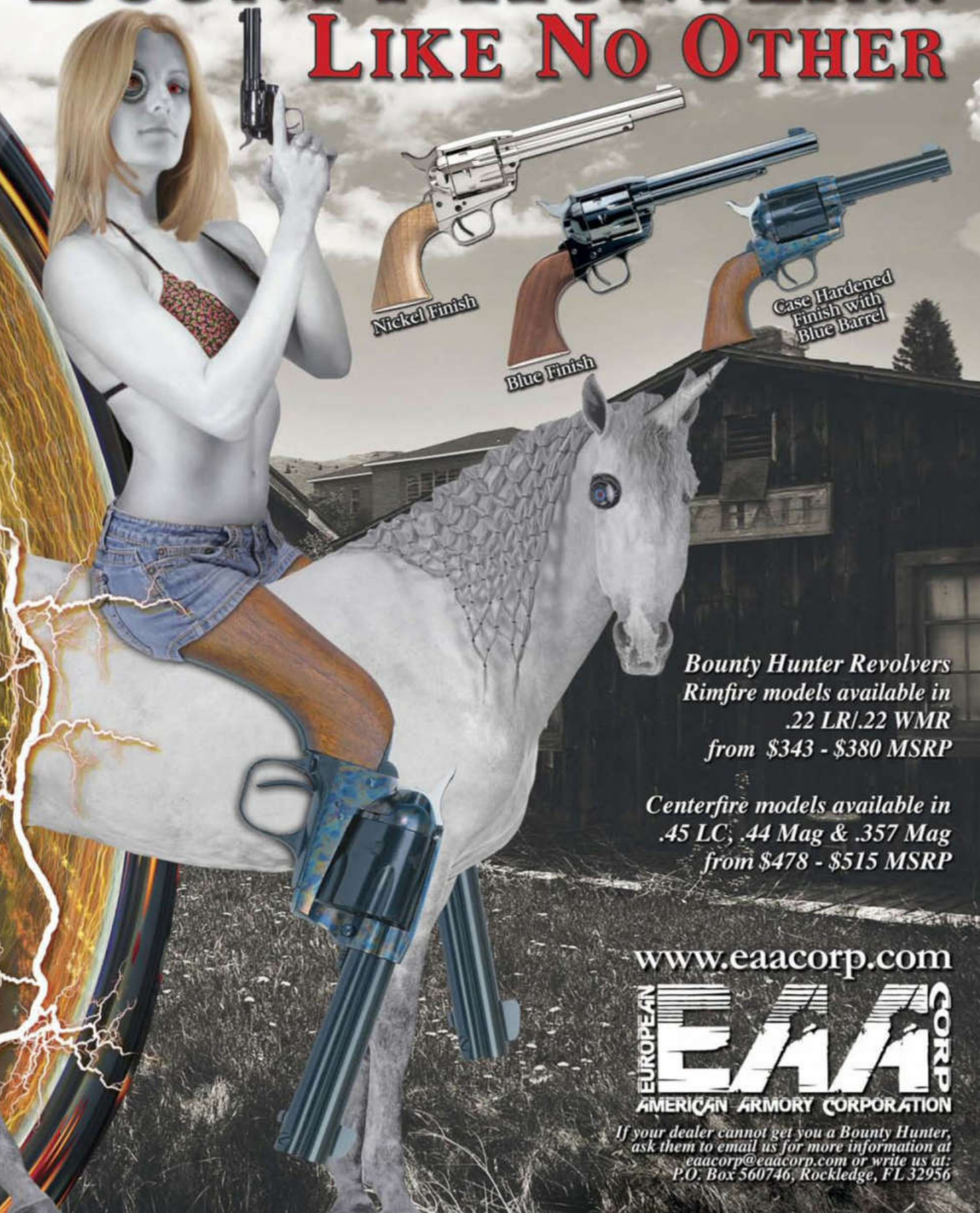
Mid-Range "Utilitarian" Optics

Today's riflescope marketplace is chock full of scopes in this category, and the 3-9X with a 1-inch main tube is the most prevalent. However, the landscape is quickly changing due to advancements that enable upward of an 8X magnification range or zoom ratio.

These days it's not that uncommon for a mid-range riflescope to have a magnification range from 2.5-16X, such as the Bushnell Elite 6500 series, or from 1.7-10X, 2.5-15X, and 3-18X, such as the Swarovski Z6(i) line. But these are "premium" offerings commanding like prices.

For most hunters and circumstances, however, an economical riflescope with a 3X to 4X zoom ratio is all that's needed. Of the most common variants (2.5-10X, 3-9X, 4-12X, and 4.5-14X) the 2.5-10X and 4-12X are my personal favorites; I like the former's

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low-end magnification, while the latter's range is well suited for shots out to 500 yards or more. Provided that both the shooter and rifle are capable of this distance, all of the listed scopes are equally capable of doing so. Of course, the ethical hunter must know his or her comfort zone.

Scopes occupying the "middle range" come in all manner of configurations, and some of their features are warranted while others are not. For example, whereas most models have 1-inch main tubes, others are available with 30-mm and even 34-mm tubes.

The primary difference is range of elevation and windage adjustment. Unless you're shooting at long range (which is covered in the next section) or the scope base holes are grossly off-center, the additional adjustments don't justify the extra cost. Scopes with 30-mm main tubes are also touted as being stronger than their 1-inch counterparts. This may be true, but I have 1-inch scopes that have endured the beatings of thousands of rounds of magnum loads and been re-zeroed numerous times (when switched to other rifles) and they haven't let me down yet.

Objective lens size is another consideration. Within this category, 40-mm is by far the most prevalent, though 44-mm and 50-mm are commonplace, too. Larger objective lenses do provide slightly increased light transmission, but the larger bells also require that the scope be mounted higher than a comparable 40-mm scope, making a consistent cheekweld difficult to achieve.

In addition, any increased brightness is unlikely to be noticed during legal shooting hours, which generally end a half-hour after sunset. Outside of hunting in the woods, where shooting light is lost more quickly, a scope with a 40-mm objective is plenty. I've yet to be left wanting for extra brightness in the waning light with one.

And, remember, you shouldn't be using your scope for spotting or judging



Often overlooked, dot-style sights are an excellent sighting tool for hunting at close range. Shown here is the Tru-Glo Titan (left) and Leupold LCO (right).



The 8.5-25X50mm is the largest scope in Leupold's immensely popular VX-3 line. Featuring high top-end magnification, a target-style reticle, and a 30mm main tube, the scope is well suited for shots at long range. Here it is atop a Thompson/Center Dimension rifle.

the caliber of animal; binoculars must be used for that purpose. Save the money you'd spend on a 50-mm version and use it for an optic with quality, fully multi-coated lenses — it's a better investment.

As for the reticle, they are available in a seemingly endless array of configurations ranging from "Duplex" and mil-dots to more exotic ones. Choose the one you're most comfortable with. Most economical and hunting-specific riflescopes have the reticle in the second focal plane where, with modifications in magnification, the image changes in size but the reticle doesn't. Thus, the subtension is

constantly changing.

For this reason, if you select a scope with a ballistic compensation reticle, you will need to select a specific magnification with which to utilize it. Many such riflescopes have a predetermined setting marked on the scope that must be used.

Depending on its features, riflescopes in this category range from less than \$100 to more than \$3,000. Every optics company will have at least one entrant in this category. Which one is best depends on where you'll be hunting and with what firearm, as well as tradeoffs you're willing to make.

Long-Range Optics

There is no single correct definition of long range. Depending on a shooter's familiarity with his or her arm and confidence, this subjective stance could mean anything from 300 yards to more than 1,000 yards.

To me, for the rifleman well-versed in the ballistics of his firearm and ammunition combination because of judicial application — not just a computer-generated chart — who can consistently call the wind accurately, “long range” begins no closer than 500 yards. Five hundred yards is where external ballistics (trajectory and wind deflection) begin to make accurate shot placement difficult.

Most purpose-built, long-range riflescopes often found in companies' “tactical” lines are expensive. A few are available for around \$1,500, but expect to pay more than \$2,000 for the standouts. High cost in these scopes is due to a combination of features, including tube size, reticle placement and type, and adjustments (i.e. zero stop), among others.

There is simply no getting around paying a premium for this type of optics, so the ends must justify the means. Are you really going to hunt, or shoot, at long range often? If you're not, the high-magnification models in the previous category will serve you as well without costing nearly as much.

Riflescopes for shooting at great distances should have a 30-mm or larger main tube, which enables additional windage and elevation adjustments. Usually, such scopes are coupled with a scope base (rail) featuring built-in elevation.

One thing to keep in mind is that 30-mm scope rings are relatively commonplace, whereas those for scopes with 34-mm and 35-mm main tubes are not. As such, there are fewer to choose from and the available models are significantly more expensive.

Key among the features of a true long-range scope is tactile and audible turret movements that are consistent, repeatable, and align with the assigned value. A

scope lacking these adjustment characteristics is better used as a paperweight.

Instead of the common ¼-inch (or ¼-m.o.a.) click value found on hunting riflescopes, many in this category have 0.1-mil movements, which are helpful when a mil-dot-style reticle is used. Of the long-range scope configurations, this is the one that I prefer.

Companies like Nightforce offer both .1-mil. and ¼-m.o.a. adjustments. It is also recommended that the scope have a return-to-zero feature, such as Weaver Optics' SmartZero or Nightforce's ZeroStop. This permits a fast and easy return to the original zero after a turret adjustment has been made.

Lastly, the riflescope must be capable of withstanding numerous turret adjustments without breaking; inexpensive optics cannot do so for long.

Whereas most hunting riflescopes, especially the inexpensive models, have the reticle in the second focal plane, the majority of the dedicated long-range versions have it in the first. When the reticle is in the first focal plane, it increases or decreases in relation to the target as the magnification settings are changed. Thus, the subtension is constant. This enables easy range estimation (using a mil-dot reticle) and holdovers (with a quality ballistic compensation reticle) at any magnification setting.

Riflescopes in this category typically have magnification ranges such as 3.5-25X, 5-20X, 5.5-22X, 5-25X, 6-30X, 6.5-20X, 8-32X and 8.5-25X. Which is “best” is a matter of personal preference. Having shot at targets at 1,000 yards using Nightforce's NXS 3.5-15X and 5.5-22X scopes, I can emphatically attest that the latter offers a distinct advantage at such ranges.

Objective lens size is also a matter of personal preference. Most long-range riflescopes have 50-mm or 56-mm objective lenses, but there are exceptions.



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No single optic is perfect for every type of hunting. With the VX-3 8.5-25X 50mm scope mounted, the Thompson/Center Dimension would be capable of anchoring big game at long range; however, it would be poorly suited for hunting at close range. But when topped with the Simmons Master Series ProHunter 1.5-5X 32mm or Tru-Glo Titan (in the foreground), it would be perfect for hunting in dense cover.

As mentioned elsewhere, the tradeoff for a large objective lens' increased light transmission is difficulty in achieving a consistent cheek weld. Should your rifle have an adjustable cheekpiece, this will be of minimal concern; for all others, it's something to consider.

An unconventional approach to long-range hunting is using Burris' Eliminator III series of scopes. After programming and zeroing the Eliminator III, simply range the animal and the proper aiming point is illuminated. It's remarkably fast and accurate, and it eliminates the need to range (or estimate) using the reticle and then make the correct adjustments. Although it doesn't fit my definition of long range, I used the original Eliminator to take a rut-driven Wyoming antelope at 426 yards. On the range, it was proven accurate well beyond that distance.

Perhaps no riflescope category is as demanding as the long-range riflescopes. On traditional-style riflescopes, the amount of turret adjustments alone from practice (which should be the case) and hunting is extremely hard on

scopes. You also want superior glass, which isn't inexpensive. Going cheap in this category invites angst; stick with well-known manufacturers and avoid the temptation to buy inexpensive options. Some of the best long-range optics come from Nightforce, Leupold, Weaver, Zeiss, Burris, Bushnell, Schmidt & Bender, and Trijicon. Although I haven't used them personally, some long-range hunters favor Huskemaw scopes.

Parting Thoughts

Having tested and used afield many sporting optics, I can say that I have learned a lot. What I provided here is a synopsis of that education, and it is by no means all-encompassing — whole volumes are dedicated to the subject. What I hoped to do was illustrate that there are many things to consider when selecting your next purchase, and prevent you from encountering some of the pitfalls I've experienced through the years. In the end, you might select the utilitarian 1-inch, 3-9X riflescope, but then again, you might not. **GW**

Magnifying Your Options

Short-Range Optics Options

Nearly every optics company offers options ranging in price from less than \$100 to more than \$2,000. Some economically priced options are:

- Leupold VX-1 Shotgun/Muzzleloader 1-4X 20mm
- Leupold VX-1 Shotgun/Muzzleloader 2-7X 33mm
- Nikon Prostaff 2-7X 32mm
- Simmons Master Series ProHunter Shotgun 1.5-5X 32mm
- Bushnell Trophy XLT 1.75-4X
- Bushnell Legend Ultra HD 1.75-5X 32mm
- Bushnell Elite 3500 2-6X 32mm
- Vortex Diamondback 1.75-5X 32mm
- Weaver 40/44 2-7X 32mm
- Weaver Grand Slam 2-8X 36mm
- Weaver Kaska 2-7X 32mm
- Weaver Kaska 1X 20mm variant

Premium options are found in the following lines:

- Leupold VX-6 and VX-3
- Bushnell Elite Tactical
- Weaver Tactical
- Vortex Razor HD Gen II
- Trijicon AccuPoint
- Trijicon AccuPower
- Trijicon VCOG
- Swarovski Z6(i)

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Black Eyed Suzy #MP810 \$14.95 Sun Beam #MP860 \$18.95 Wild Rose #MP880 \$18.95

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Starburst #MP700 \$39.95 Wind Tunnel #MP730 \$39.95 Northern Star #MP785 \$39.95

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Book
#BOK133 \$38.95

Beginning Scrimshaw

By Sandra Brady
DVD
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Scrimshaw Techniques Advancing to Color

By Sandra Brady
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#VI 202 \$28.95

Dental Style Picks



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
DP339	6 pc Dental Style Picks	9.44

Renaissance Wax



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
RW065	Renaissance Wax 2.3 oz	15.95
RW200	Renaissance Wax 7 oz	24.95

Scrimshaw Kit



Contains key chain blank, key ring, scratching tool, bottle of India ink, steel wool, carbon paper, tracing samples, applicator and instructions.

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HI44645	Red	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44655	Carmine	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44685	Blue	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44695	Green	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44705	Brown	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44112	Gray	Dye Based	3.75
HI44115	Russett	Dye Based	3.75
HI44100	White	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44201	India Ink	Pigment Based	3.75



Bond porous and non-porous materials including: wood, metal, carbon fiber and other composites and plastics with this selection of high quality CA glues. **HOT STUFF ORIGINAL** is a thin CA glue with water-like viscosity (3cps). Cure time is three to five seconds between tightly fitting, non-porous parts. **SUPERT GAP FILLER** is a medium gap filling glue with a viscosity similar to syrup (200-300 cps). Cures within 10-25 seconds giving you additional positioning time. **SPECIAL T GAP FILLER** is a thick gap filling glue with a viscosity similar to honey (1150-1500 cps). **NCF QUICK ACCELERATOR** will decrease cure time with only a light mist applied from 8-12 inches away. **SUPER SOLVENT** used to debond and dissolve CA glue from your hands and other surfaces.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	SIZE	PRICE
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SC102	Hot Stuff Original	4 oz	24.59
SC103	Super T Medium	2 oz	12.95
SC104	Super T Thick	2 oz	13.45
SC105	Quick Accelerator	6 oz	15.95
SC106	Solvent Debonder	2 oz	10.95

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WE6508	G/Flex Liquid 4 oz.	22.49
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WE8654	G5 Minute Adhesive	21.48

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KI1403	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
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KI1322	3/16"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	9.95
KI1422	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1022	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

Bengal Tiger



CAT.#	THICK	SIZE	PRICE
KI1816	1/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	8.95
KI1316	3/16"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	9.95
KI1416	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1016	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

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KI1325	3/16"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	9.95
KI1425	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1025	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

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KI1424	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
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KI1302	3/16"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	9.95
KI1402	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1002	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

Red Pearl



CAT.#	THICK	SIZE EACH PIECE	PRICE
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KI1308	3/16"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	10.95
KI1408	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	13.95
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CH486	Yellow	1/8"	13.95
CH487	Blue	1/8"	13.95
CH441	Red	1/4"	15.95
CH442	Orange	1/4"	15.95
CH443	Green	1/4"	15.95
CH444	Brown	1/4"	15.95
CH445	Clear	1/4"	15.95
CH446	Yellow	1/4"	15.95
CH447	Blue	1/4"	15.95

1/8" CELL

CAT. #	COLOR	THICKNESS	PRICE
CH881	Red	1/8"	13.95
CH882	Orange	1/8"	13.95
CH883	Green	1/8"	13.95
CH884	Brown	1/8"	13.95
CH885	Clear	1/8"	13.95
CH886	Yellow	1/8"	13.95
CH887	Blue	1/8"	13.95
CH841	Red	1/4"	15.95
CH842	Orange	1/4"	15.95
CH843	Green	1/4"	15.95
CH844	Brown	1/4"	15.95
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► TEXT & PHOTOS BY DAVE WORKMAN

PERHAPS YOU SUSPECT THAT COMPACT 9MM PISTOLS such as Heckler & Koch's dandy P30SK may come up short in their ability to stop a threat, whether in the home or on the street, but a decent selection of modern ammunition, a few hours on the range and a good chronograph will put that concern to rest.

When H&K provided a sample of their hot little ten-plus-one shooter, I decided not only to evaluate the pistol, but a healthy sample of the ammunition people now select for personal protection. Not only did the handgun pass with flying colors, so did the assortment of rounds I put down the bore and over my Chrony Alpha, set three feet ahead of the muzzle.

Impressive? Damn straight!

In my opinion, the one thing that has kept the 9mm from achieving the kind of effectiveness many people expect has been the ammunition. But over the past decade and a half, ammunition manufacturers have really jumped ahead in the development of fight-stoppers.

Strong Contender

Let's talk about the pistol first, because it's a strong contender in a pretty crowded field. The P30SK comes from the factory with a pair of ten-round double-stack magazines for size. It weighs 23.99 ounces, has a steel slide and barrel, and a polymer frame that looks like it's tough enough to take all kinds of punishment.




On the range, on the street or in a home defense scenario, the Heckler & Koch P30SK subcompact 9mm powerhouse packs a punch. (H&K photo)

“AS WITH SOME OTHER MODERN HANDGUNS, THE P30SK CAN BE TAILORED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL SHOOTER’S GRIP.”

The slide is finished with “a corrosion-resistant nitro-carburized” substance that looks tough enough to withstand the elements from the Florida Keys to the Aleutian Islands.

As with the vast majority of defensive sidearms these days, the P30SK has a molded accessory rail on the frame ahead of the trigger guard. I’m not a fan of lights or lasers, but a lot of people are, and what works for them...well...works for them, and in an emergency that’s really what counts!

Being a subcompact, this pistol is sized to tuck neatly out of sight in pocket or purse, in a good lockbox by the bed or wherever one thinks it might be needed. It measures 6.5 inches overall, is 4.57 inches high and has a 3.27-inch barrel with polygonal rifling. At its widest point, the P30SK is but 1.37 inches, which is only slightly wider than my personal carry gun, a vintage Lightweight Commander measuring 1.26 inches.



The hammer drop is located at the rear of the slide to the left of the hammer, and Workman admits this may take some getting used to by veteran handgunners. (H&K photo)



As with virtually all other polymer-framed handguns of modern design, the P30SK has an accessory rail.

Takedown is a snap, and simpler than many other small semi-autos. Remove the magazine, clear the chamber, press the slide back to where a little red mark is visible on the top of the slide release lever on the left side, and press the front end of the right side release lever. Once the red mark clears the slide, press forward and off it comes. Pull the double recoil spring and out comes the barrel. Takes about 30 seconds.

Thanks to modern aerosol cleaners and oils, cleaning this little pistol is almost a guilty pleasure. One or two passes through the bore with a brush, followed by a couple of patches, and then a wipe down in the action or just a shot of solvent, throw it all back together in a jiffy and it’s ready to rock anew.



Heckler & Koch delivers this pistol in a padded, hard-sided case that is lockable. There is a cable lock inside, and there are cut-outs for all the components.

Safety First

For safe storage, H&K supplies a cable lock, plus the hard-sided factory padded case is lockable, and inside I found this little key that fits into a tiny locking device just inside the bottom of the magazine well. Give that a turn and this pistol is rendered inert. You couldn't fire it for a million dollars in that condition. It's a solid lockup, and the control is so out-of-sight that some unauthorized person would easily miss it and think he's got a lemon.

This is particularly important for people with children in the home. When you're gone, store this gun in the locked position and keep the key in your pocket. Combined with the cable lock, if someone got hold of this pistol in its locked condition, they've got a snazzy looking paperweight and that's all.

Changing Sights

The sights got my attention. Drift adjustable front and rear, the three-dot sights feature a luminous sub-

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Above: A shooter can tailor the grip circumference by swapping out side panels and backstraps. Three sets come with the pistol.

With an overall length of just 6.42 inches, the P30SK is well proportioned for purse or IWB carry. (H&K photo)

stance that glows real good in the dark. It's not radioactive, and the sights seem to stay bright enough to be picked up easily in low light for a decent amount of time. Indeed, I pulled the pistol out of its box after it had been stored for a couple of days, and those sights were impossible to not notice.

The front sight can be replaced to accommodate needed changes in elevation, but my initial experience of shooting a bit low and to the left was overcome with a shift in the sight picture and a change in ammunition. The 115-grain stuff seemed to shoot a bit lower than the 124-grainers, and had I found some 147-grain loads, I suspect the gun would have shot dead-on at gunfighting distances.

As with some other modern handguns, the P30SK can be tailored for an individual shooter's grip. The pistol comes with three different backstraps that cover the mainspring, plus three sets of side panels that can be mixed and matched until one finds their favorite combination. All of these components have textured surfaces for a sure hold, even in wet or humid, sweaty weather.

Note that the short grip may not fit everybody's hand. Your pinky will most likely ride on the bottom of the magazine base. While shooting, I didn't notice any problem with this.

Tailored Grip

When I got the test piece, I pulled off the factory-installed "fat" back end and side panels and installed the slim set. All it takes is to tap out a single retention pin at the butt, slide off the backstrap and the side panels, and then install the replacements.

There is no magazine disconnect, so even when the magazine is removed, this pistol can be discharged. There's a loaded chamber indicator on the top front surface of the external extractor.

Now, the one thing that can really trip up people used to a thumb safety or a frame- or slide-mounted hammer drop/decocker is how H&K positions its decocker. It's a small thumb press at the rear of the slide. Give this lever a downward press and the hammer drops safely to the un-cocked position. It works, it's reliable and at the range during repeated tries, I could not get the thing to goof me up.

What will undoubtedly make the P30SK even more attractive is the price tag. The MSRP is less than \$725 and for that, you get a tough little handgun from one of the best names in the business.

But a handgun can really only be as good as the ammunition that one puts in the gun when it comes time to stop a threat, and that brings us around to the other part of this evaluation, exclusively for *Gun World*. I'm happy to say that the loads I used all worked.

"THE P30SK
COMES
FROM THE
FACTORY
WITH A
PAIR OF
TEN-ROUND
DOUBLE-
STACK
MAGAZINES..."

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All In On Ammunition

I used 115-grain and 124-grain ammunition selections. Everything clocked above 1,000 fps, and all but two loads topped 1,100 fps.

The 115-grain Sig V-Crown warped out if the barrel at a sizzling 1,157 fps — the hottest of all the loads — and the 124-grain Gold Dot from Speer streaked out at an average of 1,132 fps. Trust me on this, if either one of those bullets connect with some bad guy, it is going to get his undivided attention!

The 115-grain Gold Dot came in at 1,150 fps (with a high speed of 1,175 fps) and I was delighted with the Black Hills 124-grainer, which averaged 1,128 fps. At gunfighting distances, that bullet crosses the distance in less than a heartbeat, and packs a punch.

Federal's 124-grain FMJ averaged 1,067 fps, and it was one of the more accurate loads I fired in this pistol. That's important because for a bullet to work, it's got to hit the target at which it's aimed.

I also found about half a box of older UMC 115-grain FMJ ammunition, and this stuff came screaming out at 1,117 fps average, which impressed me. I know that many people use this round for target practice, but with that kind of speed, I wouldn't say "no" if someone using the P30SK (or some other subcompact 9mm) decided to load up like an old Texas Ranger once told me he loaded his magazines, alternating hollowpoints and FMJs to ensure feeding reliability.

The first (top) round in the magazine is an FMJ, presuming you have a JHP in the chamber. Then comes a hollowpoint, followed by another ball round, and so on down through the full magazine. Not only does this sequence virtually guarantee reliable feeding, it also gives someone a little edge in the event an attacker is wearing multiple clothing layers. If one round doesn't punch through, the next one should.

A couple of rounds that I didn't get a chance to try out were the Black Ops 9mm frangible bullet weighing 85 grains with a reported muzzle velocity of 1,320 fps, and the Remington 124-grain brass jacketed hollowpoint with a reported muzzle velocity of 1,100 fps in its Ultimate Defense Compact Handgun ammo line. Winchester also has a 115-grain Super-X Silvertip JHP that has a reported muzzle velocity of 1,225 fps.

A couple of rounds from Hornady also should sizzle in the P30SK, a 115-grain FTX



There's a loaded chamber indicator on the top of the external extractor.



To disassemble, remove the magazine, clear the chamber, press the slide back to a take-down notch in the slide and press the slide release from right to left until a red stripe appears.



There's an additional security feature hidden inside the frame. It's a lock in the magazine well and H&K supplies a key to use it for when the gun is stored.



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The author fired this group with a two-hand hold at 15 yards using Federal 124-grain FMJ ammunition.

*“WHAT WILL
UNDOUBTEDLY
MAKE THE P30SK
EVEN MORE
ATTRACTIVE IS
THE PRICE TAG.”*

While the grip frame is stubby, it is textured all around and features molded finger grooves for a solid hold. (H&K photo)

Critical Defense load that leaves the muzzle at 1,140 fps, and a 125-grain XTP that checks out at 1,110 fps and at 50 yards still churns along at 1,030, according to published ballistics.

For home defense, I have never said “no” to anybody who loads up with a frangible, and there are some good ones out there. The Glaser Safety Slug and Magsafe Defender are two top choices that can deliver a punch, especially at close range, but they’re pricey.

You can shop around for ammunition and find a load that suits your individual needs and preferences. What I found were impressive ballistics from several popular rounds that are available all over the country.

Impressive Package

I think the bottom line here is that Heckler & Koch has produced a well-designed DA/SA semi-auto subcompact pistol, and to get the most out of this little powerhouse, use the right ammunition. My chronograph results tell the tale. Out of a sub-4-inch barrel, everything I put into that pistol came out at warp speed, and downrange they hit what I aimed at.

It’s an impressive little pistol, and my guess is that holsters will be readily available from all the major companies, whether one wants nylon, Kydex, horsehide or cowhide. If one prefers the 9mm round, today’s modern ammunition compliments the P30SK and makes it a formidable defensive sidearm at home, in the office or on the street. **GW**

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SPECIFICATIONS

Heckler & Koch

Model: P30SK (subcompact)

Caliber: 9mm

Capacity: Ten-plus-one

Action: DA/SA semi-auto

Slide: High carbon steel

Frame: Polymer

Finish: Matte black

Barrel: 3.27 inches

Height: 4.57 inches

Weight: 23.99 oz.

Width: 1.37 inches

OAL: 6.42 inches

MSRP: **\$719.00**

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Pred

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY MIKE DICKERSON

THE HAWKEYE PREDATOR RIFLE enjoys a reputation as one of Ruger's most accurate designs. It has been around in its present configuration since 2009, and is, in the view of many owners, probably the best predator/varmint-blasting model that Ruger has ever produced.

The company's Gunsite Scout rifle, on the other hand, was designed for an entirely different market. Introduced in 2011, the rifle was Ruger's interpretation of Col. Jeff

Cooper's "scout rifle" concept, incorporating such elements as a 10-round box magazine, a picatinny rail and a flash suppressor.

The two wouldn't seem to go together – unless you're a Ruger engineer intent on making good things happen for your customers.

With input from some world-class shooting instructors, Ruger is offering the best of both worlds with the new Hawkeye FTW Predator rifle, which combines aspects of the Gunsite Scout Rifle and the Hawkeye Predator rifle.

The new Ruger Hawkeye FTW Predator rifle incorporates elements from Ruger's Gunsite Scout and Hawkeye Predator rifles. With its matte stainless barrel and action mated to a Green Mountain laminate stock, it turns heads at the range.



ator Precision

COMBINING THE BEST ASPECTS OF THE HAWKEYE PREDATOR AND THE GUNSITE SCOUT RIFLES, **RUGER'S NEW FTW PREDATOR RIFLE** IS CRAZY ACCURATE.



The Ruger scope rings that came with the rifle provided plenty of clearance for bolt cycling.

“ALL SIX FACTORY LOADS SHOT BEST GROUPS MEASURING AN INCH OR LESS AT 100 YARDS.”



The rifle incorporates the traditional three-position Ruger safety, which allows you to load and unload the gun with the safety in the middle, engaged position.



The Predator comes with an excellent two-stage target trigger. From the factory, the trigger on our test rifle broke at 3 lbs. 2 oz.

BEST OF BOTH

The new rifle takes its name from the world-renowned FTW Shooting School in Barksdale, Texas, where SAAM (Sportsman's All-weather, All-terrain Marksmanship) shooting instructors collaborated, after extensive on-range consultation, with Ruger engineers to produce the FTW Predator rifle. The goal was to pair the quick-handling ergonomics of the Gunsite Scout rifle with the trigger, action and long-range accuracy of the Predator rifle.

At first glance, the Hawkeye FTW Predator rifle looks much like the standard Hawkeye Predator model, with one notable exception. The rifle uses the adjustable buttstock design found on the Gunsite Scout rifle. The soft rubber buttpad comes with three half-inch spacers that allow you to adjust length of pull, which,

for the uninitiated, is the distance from the trigger to the end of the buttstock. On this rifle, that translates into a length of pull that's adjustable between 12.75 in. and 14.25 in.

While some may not care for the aesthetics of this arrangement, there's a lot to be said for the design. Most rifle stocks are designed to fit an average (whatever that is) adult male and may be ill suited for women or young shooters. The importance of proper length of pull is well-known to shotgunners, but is often ignored by rifle shooters. If this measurement is off, your dominant eye may not properly align with the sights when you shoulder a rifle, and you may have to strain your neck too far forward to get a proper cheek weld or full sight picture through a scope. Strain is not conducive to accurate shooting.

The new Ruger's action is the non-rotating, Mauser-type, controlled-round feed design, incorporating a beefy one-piece stainless bolt.



As with all Ruger Hawkeye rifles, integral scope mounts are milled directly onto the top of the receiver.



Fit and finish on the FTW Predator were of high quality for a factory production rifle.



The adjustable length of pull on the Predator rifle allows you to tailor it to the shooter, making the rifle a great choice for those of small stature, or for a youngster to grow into. It also has the added benefit, for the aforementioned average adult male, of allowing you to shorten the length of pull to compensate for bulky winter clothing or lengthen it when shooting in warm-weather attire.

EXCELLENT TRIGGER

One thing the FTW Predator rifle has that the Gunsite Scout rifle does not is an excellent trigger for long-range work. The Scout rifle's trigger isn't bad, but in my experience, out-of-the-box Scout rifle triggers break at a bit under 5 lbs. That's a little heavy for my taste. The FTW Predator rifle comes with a two-stage, ad-

justable target trigger. As it arrived from the factory, the trigger on our test rifle had a very light initial pull before meeting a solid stop. It then broke crisp and clean at a consistent average of 3 lbs., 2 oz., as measured by my Lyman trigger gauge. It is, in my humble judgement, light years ahead of other Ruger triggers.

Initially, the FTW Predator rifle is available with a 22-in. barrel with a 1:10 twist chambered in .308 Win., or with a 24-in. barrel with a 1:8 twist chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor. I chose to test a gun that was chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor, for reasons that will become evident shortly.

The new Ruger's 24-in. matte stainless, cold hammer-forged barrel is mated to a Green Mountain laminate stock, with a checkered grip and wrap-around checkering



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on the forend. The medium-contour barrel is not, as you might expect, free-floated. Conventional wisdom holds that barrels must be free-floated to achieve consistent accuracy, but I've owned numerous rifles over the years which use pressure points, or non-free-floated barrels, that delivered top-notch accuracy. Where these rifles sometimes go astray is when shooting long shot strings causes the barrel to heat up, altering point of impact, or when there's a significant change in humidity, which can make wood stocks expand or shrink. Of course, that's precisely what a laminated stock is designed to resist, and in testing, the FTW Predator's stock performed as intended. The rifle shot consistent groups with the same round to the same point of impact whether the barrel was hot or cold.

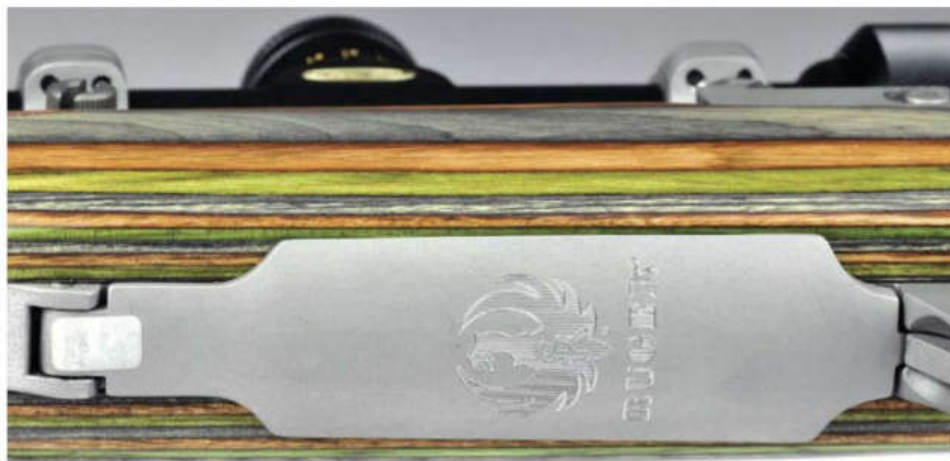
The matte stainless action is the virtually indestructible Ruger non-rotating, Mauser-type, controlled-round feed design. Using a beefy, one-piece stainless steel bolt, the action cycles with buttery smoothness and, unlike some newer rifles I've tested lately, it does not require an inordinate amount of force to work the bolt. The rifle fed cartridges from the magazine with no issues, and I encountered no problems with case extraction or ejection. Everything functioned exactly as you would expect Ruger's time-honored, field-proven, M77 action to function. Capacity is four rounds.

The bottom of the action has a hinged steel floorplate with the distinctive, engraved Ruger logo. The patented floorplate latch fits flush with the trigger guard and does a good job of preventing you from accidentally triggering the latch and dumping cartridges on the ground. I wish all gun makers, especially those churning out detachable polymer magazines for bolt action rifles, were equally attentive to this rather important requirement.



*"RUGER IS OFFERING THE
BEST OF BOTH WORLDS
WITH THE NEW HAWKEYE
FTW PREDATOR RIFLE..."*

Ruger's patented floorplate latch fits flush with the trigger guard, minimizing the possibility of accidentally opening the floorplate and dumping rounds on the ground.



The steel hinged floorplate is engraved with the distinctive Ruger logo.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

In addition to the rock-solid action, there are certain things you automatically expect from a Ruger Hawkeye rifle. One of them is the standard Ruger three-position safety, which the FTW rifle retains. I've always liked the design because it allows you to load and unload cartridges with the safety in the

middle, engaged position. Another thing I've always liked about Ruger Hawkeye rifles is their patented integral scope mounts, which are milled directly onto the top of the steel receiver. These allow you to attach scope rings directly to the rifle, eliminating the need for a separate scope base and removing one more of those seemingly endless variables

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from the accuracy equation.

Empty, the rifle weighs 8.12 lbs. That is not light by today's standards, but many shooters, especially those who hunt primarily from blinds or drive from stand to stand, prefer heavier predator rifles for the stability they provide when shooting off sticks or improvised rests. Full-up with scope and ammo, the gun is not what I would call a "walking predator rifle." It falls more squarely in the realm of the traditional varmint rifle, but the lines between varmint and predator rifles have blurred to the extent that the terms are used interchangeably today.

Rifle weight is really a matter of personal preference. I know dedicated predator callers who hunt exclusively with heavy rifles, just as I know some, like me, who prefer lighter rifles when there's a lot of walking from stand to stand. Put me in the prairie dog fields, however, and I will take a heavier rifle, given a choice.

I set out to test the FTW Predator rifle with high expectations. The 6.5 Creedmoor cartridge has a well-deserved reputation as an inherently accurate round. It has steadily gained favor among

long-range shooters since its introduction by Hornady in 2007 as a competition round, and has established a formidable record of accuracy in competition.

It's also beginning to catch on with hunters as more factory offerings become available with bullets designed purely for hunting. They're discovering what target shooters have known all along. The cartridge offers a winning combination of excellent accuracy, great ballistics and little recoil. If there's one round that can demonstrate the true accuracy potential of a rifle, the 6.5 Creedmoor is it, and that's why I jumped at the chance to test the new Ruger in this chambering.

For testing, I used the supplied Ruger rings to mount a Weaver Super Slam 2-10X42 scope with EBX reticle. This 5X magnification-range scope has become one of my favorites for squeezing maximum accuracy out of rifles at the bench. It has the usual qualities you would expect from a quality scope, such as fully multi-coated lenses with hard coating and argon-purged tubes, but the features I really value during prolonged test sessions at the bench are its clear glass and pull-up, cap-less turrets.



CONTACT

Competitive Edge Dynamics
CEDhk.com

Hornady Ammunition
Hornady.com

Nagel's Gun Shop
NagelsGuns.net

Nosler Ammunition
Nosler.com

Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc.
Ruger.com

Weaver Optics
WeaverOptics.com

Winchester Ammunition
Winchester.com





A concept borrowed from the Ruger Gunsite Scout rifle is an adjustable buttstock design that allows you to tailor length of pull to the shooter.

*"THE ADJUSTABLE LENGTH OF PULL ON THE FTW RIFLE
ALLOWS YOU TO TAILOR IT TO THE SHOOTER..."*

STUNNING ACCURACY

I began testing by running six different factory loads over my Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph to see what sort of velocities the rifle's 24-in. barrel would deliver. In most cases, velocities were slightly faster than factory-advertised velocities. One notable exception was Nosler's 140-gr. HPBT Match load, which clocked in at 194 fps faster than factory stated velocity. I don't know what barrel length Nosler used for testing, but I suspect it was shorter than the Ruger's barrel. In any event, the Nosler load was slightly faster than the other two 140-gr. loads tested.

With velocity testing completed, it was time to see what the rifle could do in the accuracy department, and I quickly discovered that it did exceedingly well.

The results, when I did my job properly behind the trigger, were simply stunning.

For starters, all six factory loads shot best groups measuring an inch or less at 100 yards. I can't remember the last time I tested a factory production rifle that did that with every load tested. If you calculate the average size of the best groups from all six loads, you'll arrive at the rather happy figure of half an inch.

But that's just part of the story.

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When you take a closer look at these best groups, things really get interesting. Hornady's 140-gr. A-MAX load printed a best group measuring 0.30 in., measured the traditional way from outside edge to outside edge, minus the diameter of the bullet, which in this case is .264. Groups shrank even farther with Winchester's 140-gr. BTHP Match load, which delivered a best group of just 0.20 in. and average groups of 0.48 in.

If you consider these to simply be lucky groupings, think again.

With Nosler's Custom Competition Match grade 140-gr. HPBT load, the rifle put three bullets into a single ragged hole measuring 0.18 in. So that's three groups, from three different loads, measuring 0.30 in. or less. I could almost hear the rifle saying, "Do I have your attention yet?"

It's worth noting that all of these best groups were shot with 140-gr. bullets, which the rifle seemed to favor. It didn't shoot quite as stunningly with the lighter rounds tested, but it was no slouch, either. Early groups with the first



Predator Precision

SPECIFICATIONS

Ruger Hawkeye FTW Predator Rifle

Action: Stainless controlled-round feed bolt action

Caliber: 6.5 Creedmoor

Barrel: 24-in. stainless, 1:8 twist

Stock: Green Mountain Laminate, adjustable LOP

Finish: Hawkeye Matte Stainless

Trigger: Two-stage, adjustable target

Sights: None, integral scope mounts

Weight: 8.12 lbs. without scope

MSRP: \$1,099.00

RUGER HAWKEYE PREDATOR FTW RIFLE 6.5 CREEDMOOR

LOAD	AVG. MUZZLE VELOCITY (FPS)	AVG. 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)	BEST 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)
Hornady Superformance 120-gr. GMX	3030	1.12	0.87
Hornady Match 120-gr. A-MAX	2863	0.66	0.49
Hornady Superformance 129-gr. SST	2996	1.47	1.00
Hornady Match 140-gr. A-MAX	2725	0.71	0.30
Nosler Custom Competition Match Grade-140 gr. HPBT	2744	0.60	0.18
Winchester Match 140-gr. BTHP	2717	0.48	0.20

Note: Velocities measured with Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph. All groups fired in wind measuring 0-8 mph. Groups measured outer edge to outer edge, with bullet diameter subtracted.



Left: The author put the rifle through its paces at the range with six different factory loads and was impressed with the accuracy of the rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor chambering. He used a Weaver Super Slam 2-10X42 scope, which he favors for its capless, pull-up turrets.

Above: Accuracy doesn't get much better than a single ragged hole at 100 yards. The FTW Predator shot this group with Nosler Custom Competition Match grade 140-gr. HPBT ammo.

round tested, a 129-gr. hunting load, were mildly disappointing, averaging just under an inch and a half. Of course, that's perfectly acceptable accuracy for a hunting load, but it wasn't quite up to the standards one expects from 6.5 Creedmoor ammo.

I believe that was partly due to the rifle's preference for heavier bullets and partly due to the fact that the gun just took a little time to settle in, as some guns do. In all fairness to the ammo, groups improved considerably as testing proceeded. Hornady's Supformance 120-gr. GMX load produced average groups of 1.12 in. and a best group of 0.87 in. That was a step in the right direction — notably, with a hunting bullet — and things further improved with Hornady's 120-gr.

A-MAX Match load, which printed average groups of 0.66 in. and a best group of 0.49 in.

That's when I switched to the 140-gr. loads and the rifle showed what it can really do. Collectively, the three 140-gr. loads produced average groups measuring just over half an inch, and the average size of best groups from these three heavier loads was a mere 0.22 in.

That, I would submit, is a stellar performance for a factory production rifle that's shooting factory ammunition. These results speak volumes about the quality of both the ammunition and the rifle, and I have no hesitation stating that this is one of the best-shooting Ruger rifles I have ever wrapped a trigger finger around. **GW**



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IN THE LAND OF GIANTS

Alberta was once home to some of the largest animals ever to roam the Earth. Seventy million years later, large predators still haunt the wild forests of this Canadian province.



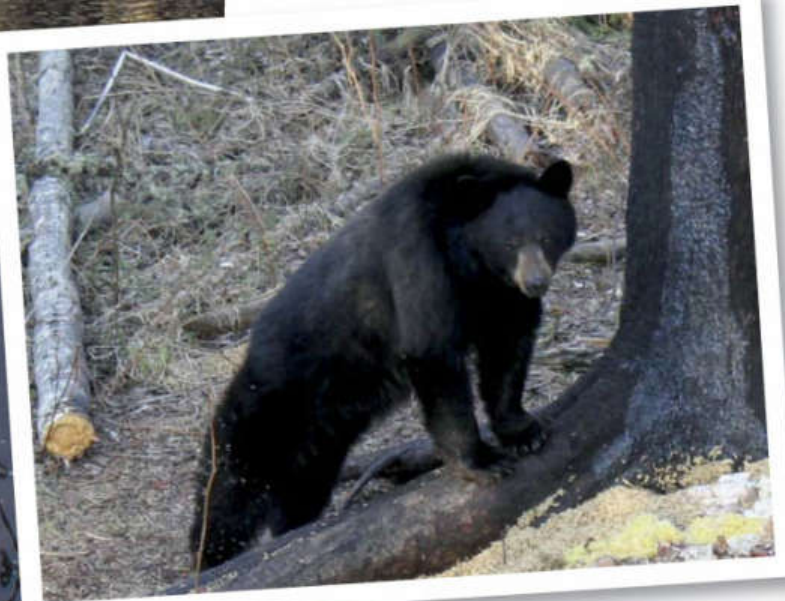
► TEXT & PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

THE FLAT, ROLLING PLAINS OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA may not look like a place you'd expect to find giant reptiles, but millions of years ago these dry prairies were a sub-tropical landscape that was home to turtles, snakes, ancient crocodiles and some of the largest animals that ever roamed the Earth, including *Albertosaurus*, a close relative of the tyrannosaurus.

Fossilized remains of over 500 different extinct and extant organisms led to this area being named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the late 1970s, and thousands of tourists travel to see the remains of this lost world every year.

Today, the flattened and dry plains of Alberta are home to mule deer, pronghorn, elk and coyotes. But that doesn't mean that all of the large predators in this northern landscape have vanished. On the contrary, Alberta's wilderness is still dominated by large, powerful predators, including wolves, mountain lions, black bears and grizzly bears.

The various logging roads and cut lines



Part of the Alberta bear hunting experience is having the opportunity to spend time in the wilderness enjoying magnificent scenery and getting up close and personal with the province's big bruins.

The first bear showed up at the bait after the author had been sitting less than thirty minutes. Small in size and low in rank among the local black bear population, this bear didn't stick around long once larger bruins started appearing from the Alberta woods.

are marked with the prints of bears. The central portion of the state near Grand Prairie is home to some of the largest bears in Alberta, and the province's biggest recorded bruin came from these virgin birch and spruce forests.

Northern Lights

Flying from Edmonton to Grand Prairie, the landscape changes from a patchwork of farms and agricultural fields to larger tracts of forested land dissected by dirt roads and chestnut-colored rivers. I arrived at Red Willow Lodge just after nine o'clock in the evening, but in May at this northern latitude there was still shooting light.

There wasn't enough time to sit on a bait that evening, but there was time to check the zero on my Ruger American Rifle, topped with a Redfield Revolution scope and a Warne custom mount that allowed a Crimson Trace Railmaster laser light to be mounted on the Picatinny rail beside the riflescope.

Rules regarding hunting with laser optics vary among countries; in the U.S., some states allow hunting using lasers, while others do not. For hunting Alberta's large bears over bait, the aid of a laser sight makes perfect sense. Black bears aren't hard to kill provided you put the proper bullet in the proper place, but sometimes finding that aiming point is difficult on a black animal in the dark confines of a forest. The use of a laser helps ensure accurate shot placement and helps reduce the odds of injuring or losing a bear in low light.

As daylight was fading into darkness, I placed the dot on the target, steadied the rifle on the bench and fired three Federal Fusion .30-06 bullets into a cluster at seventy yards. The rifle was on, and I was ready to hunt.

As we unpacked and settled into our rooms, Todd Loewen, the owner and operator of the Red Willow, came in and motioned me outside.

"You ever seen the Northern Lights?" he asked. I said I had not.

Outside, the aurora appeared on the horizon, a faint blue-green fog that grew and shrank moment by moment. At the last, the sides of the aurora darkened and



For this hunt, the author used a Ruger American Rifle chambered in .30-06 and topped with a Redfield scope and Crimson Trace laser. It was a superb bear-hunting rig, with enough power to topple even the biggest bruin.

"I RAISED THE RIFLE, FOUND THE SHOULDER WITH THE LASER, AND FIRED ONE LAST SHOT."

the center grew more intense and bulged, a bright blue-green arc that swelled over the horizon before vanishing into the darkness. The ghostly green light rose up in a dull flash once more, and then vanished altogether in the dark night.

"Maybe that's a good sign," Todd said.

Searching for Giants

Some hunters believe that baiting for bears is a simple way to fill your tag. But each year bears are lost because hunters don't deliver a fatal shot, and finding a really good bear is always a challenge.

On the first afternoon, Crimson



It's not uncommon to see multiple bears around the bait site, and they are often so busy feeding they never notice the hunter. Black bear hunting offers a rare chance for hunters to view bear behavior in the wild for hours on end, one of the great thrills of the sport.



Alberta truly is the land of giants. Dinosaurs once roamed here, and today it's home to some huge black bears and a growing population of grizzlies.

Trace's Kent Thomas, writer Aaron Carter and I split up and headed to different stands to sit for the evening. I rode with Todd, bouncing through a narrow cut between two tracks of heavy timber. Bear tracks lined the flooded, muddy road, and I could tell that Todd was estimating their size as the ATV groaned and trudged through the mud and ruts. Todd braked, and then killed the motor.

"Look at that one," he said.

There, pressed in the fresh mud, was an enormous, oval bear track. The shape and length of the claws indicated black bear, but the overall size of the print left us wondering if perhaps one of the province's small population of grizzlies hadn't walked this path ahead of us.

We continued on to another stand. That huge bear, black or grizzly, hadn't stopped to eat at the bait. Instead,

it had moved on down the mud path and into the deep forests. We traveled to another stand, this one deep in the heart of an old-growth pine and poplar forest, and that was where I set up for the evening.

The sun was setting when I heard the first bear approaching slowly and quietly from directly behind me. The setting sun had bathed the western half of the white poplars in orange light, and I listened for the better part of ten minutes as a very large predator made its way up to my stand.

I saw the bear's shadow lengthening as the animal slipped closer to the bait below the tree. I risked looking down, and directly under my stand I saw the blocky black head as the bear stood and watched the bait area. He took a few tentative steps forward, moving with unnerving stealth for such a large animal, and I reached



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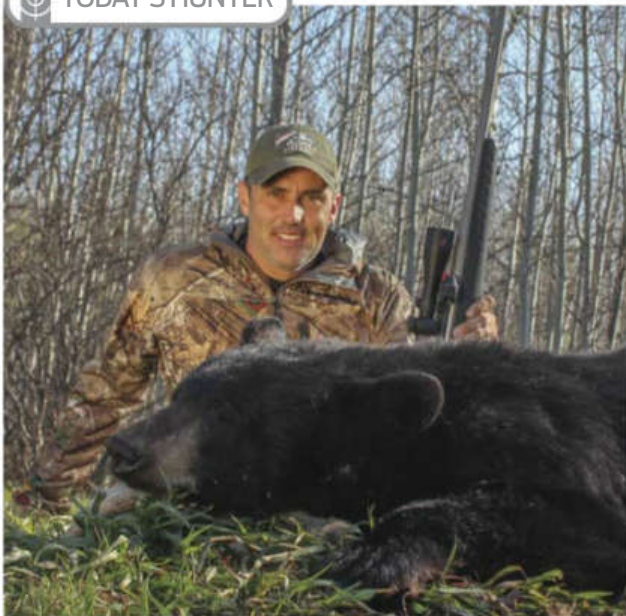
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forward and touched the activation pad on the Railmaster.

Long moments passed as the bear hesitated, the red dot of the laser bouncing over the bait pile. Judging bears is difficult, and even though I had shot other bears before, it took some time to determine whether or not the bear traveling below me was a shooter. Slowly, the large black animal slipped over the leaf litter to the bait pile and settled down to feed.

After ten minutes, I decided that even though I had two tags the bear at the bait wasn't one that I wanted to shoot. One of the greatest joys of hunting baited bears is the opportunity to watch them feed and interact at close range regardless of whether you fill a tag or not.

For the better part of an hour the bear alternatively fed and rose to patrol the edge of the bait site. Then, it stood up with a start and rose onto its hind legs, looking at the dark forest on the other side of the bait.

With a whoof and rush it turned, running heavy-footed back in the direction it had come.

On the far side of the bait, I saw another bear, large and black, looming just outside the area that had been cleared for hunting. It wasn't much larger than the other one, and it slipped in just as silently to feed. As night fell, the second bear rose and vanished back into the forest and I slipped out of the tree and walked through the dark forest to intercept Todd as he came to pick me up.

The Big One

On the second evening, I set up deeper in the forest and almost immediately had a pair of bears working the bait. As they fought and dug through the contents of the barrel, a second, much larger bear appeared between two trees. Todd had tutored me in the methods for judging a bear, but he offered the caveat that

"when a big one shows up, you'll know right away."

This bear, which entered with an authority and swagger that the others lacked, was most certainly a shooter and his reputation preceded him at the bait site, for the tandem of smaller bears offered the bear a wide berth and abandoned the bait when he ambled into view, his head high, massive shoulder muscles rolling beneath his glossy hide.

I touched the laser and watched the beam bouncing on the ground like an irradiated mosquito, silently waiting until the big bear provided me with a shot. If I put the bullet in the right place I knew that it should be an easy shot, but there was little room for error. Well-shot bears die quickly and cleanly, but marginal shots led to long hours of tracking and the very real possibility that the animal would never be recovered.

The bear began feeding immediately, and with its head and shoul-

Top Left: The author's second bear came on the last day. The Crimson Trace laser mounted on the rifle proved to be a perfect tool for placing the shot on a dark animal in dense woods.

Top right: Fellow *Gun World* writer Aaron Carter took this beautiful cinnamon bear. One of the advantages of hunting in Alberta is an abundance of color-phase bears, and with two tags you have double the opportunity to score on a color-phase trophy.



ders inside the barrel it didn't offer an opportunity for a clean shot. Other bears came in, hanging around the periphery as the boar fed. With every passing moment the light faded and the odds of getting a good shot were lessening, so I knew that I needed the bear to move if I was going to have any chance at a shot.

My opportunity came when a smaller bear that was positioned to my right whuffed and rushed into the woods, perhaps catching my scent or, just as likely, nervous about its proximity to the larger boar. Whatever the cause, the incident offered the chance I needed as the big bear stood up and moved to my right, offering me a broadside shot. I held the rifle tight against my shoulder, settled the beam on the space just behind the front leg, and pressed the trigger.

A flash of flame erupted and the rifle rose up in recoil, and as the bullet struck a half-dozen bears around the bait site rushed away into the surrounding forest. The big bear was hit hard, but it turned and ran

down a path that led back toward the mud road and crashed through the downed limbs and brush.

Even though I was sure the shot was true, I didn't want to risk losing the bear if I could help it. I slipped down from the tree and moved through the dark woods with my rifle ready. I started down the path that the wounded bruin had taken and there, standing fifty yards away in the shattered skeleton of a blown-down poplar, was the bear. I raised the rifle, found the shoulder with the laser, and fired one last shot. The bear went down.


By the time Todd's son Taylor came to pick me up the woods were silent once again. Two more bears came by after mine was on the ground, inky shadows slipping through the near-dark woods. There was a sense of great relief knowing that the bear was down for good, and as I sat leaning against the tree with the rifle across my legs I thought how wonderful it was to spend time in a place where giant predators still dominate the landscape. **GW**

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Several powders have burning rates that make them suitable for loading 90 grain bullets in the 9mm Luger.



LUGER HT



LIGHTER LOADS
FOR THE 9MM
LUGER CAN
ENHANCE THIS
EFFECTIVE,
VERSATILE, AND
USEFUL CALIBER

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY JAMES E. HOUSE

FOR OVER 100 YEARS, the 9mm Luger has been a popular choice for military, law enforcement, and personal use. Originally loaded with 115-grain full metal jacketed bullets, the true potential of the cartridge was not developed. Bullet manufacturing has changed enormously in the last decade and some of the products make the 9mm a much more effective and versatile caliber.

Bullets for the 9mm Luger measure 0.355 inches, the same as the .380 Auto, .357 Sig, 38 Super, and a few other calibers. The result is that the selection of bullets for loading the 9mm is very large. Bullets in the range of 85-100 grains are often considered most suitable for use in small cases such as the .380 Auto, but they also make practical loads in other 0.355-caliber cartridges. Light gallery loads that I have never seen feature a 47-grain bullet and Cor-Bon offers a 9mm +P defense load featuring a 90-grain bullet advertised to give a velocity of 1500 fps. The heaviest bullet that I have encountered is the 158-grain subsonic load offered by Fiocchi. With such a range of bullets available, the 9mm can be a versatile caliber.

BULLET SELECTION

Although I would not normally choose a 9mm load with a very light bullet for defense, such loads would be useful. For example, if the accuracy of the load were adequate, a 90-grain rapidly expanding bullet at approximately 1300 fps would be devastating on varmints. A coyote called within range would also be in danger of dispatch very quickly. After all, such a bullet fired by the Governor of Texas at much lower velocity from a .380 Auto did the job on a coyote, which created the most media-reported coyote passing in history just a few years ago.

I will begin by saying that the 9mm Luger is not necessarily my favorite handgun cartridge or even my favorite autoloading handgun cartridge, but it is an effective and useful caliber. In good pistols, it is accurate and recoil is mild. Being of an experimental nature, I like to explore the uses of most things, so I decided to try to adapt my 9mm for varmints by developing loads that utilize bullets that are light for the caliber.

Bullet selection is based more on availability than anything else. Recently, factory .380 Auto ammunition has been in rather short supply and that leads to reloading components being scarce as well. However, I was able to come up with a few "varmint" bullets including 90-grain Speer Gold Dot, Sierra JHP, and Hornady XTP varieties as well as 88-grain Remington JHP.

The 9mm Luger has small case capacity so powders with rather fast burning rates are the norm for all bullet weights. With bullets of lighter weight, that is certainly the case and checking my powder reservoir turned up Hodgdon Titegroup and CFE Piston, Winchester 231 and AutoComp, IMR 700-X, and Alliant Unique. Other powders such as Accurate No. 2, IMR 4765 and 7625, and Alliant Bullseye could also be used in this situation.

Because 90-grain bullets are so short, only a short segment of a seated bullet is inside the case and care must be taken to make sure the crimp is comparatively tight



"THE SELECTION OF BULLETS FOR LOADING THE 9MM IS VERY LARGE."

and that the bullet is started straight in the case. I used a Lee seating die, which utilizes a sliding tube that centers the bullet as it is inserted and I had no problems in bullet seating. Crimping was done with a Lee factory crimp die that produces a taper crimp.

The loads were tested in my Ruger P95, which has a 3.9-inch barrel. Winchester cases and Winchester small pistol primers were used in assembling all of the cartridges. Velocities were measured at 10 feet from the muzzle using a Competition Electronics ProChrono chronograph. The load parameters and results obtained are shown in the accompanying table.

Although normally loaded with heavier bullets, the 9mm Luger performs well with bullets as light as 90 grains.

CONTACT

Alliant Powder
(800) 276-9337
AlliantPowder.com

Hodgdon
(913) 632-9455
Hodgdon.com

Hornady Manufacturing Company
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* Based on bullet and crush cavity diameters versus competition; tested with a micro handgun in 380 Auto with a 2.75-inch barrel fired into 10 percent ballistics gelatin at 10 feet.

RESULTS OF TESTING 9MM LOADS WITH 90-GRAIN HORNADY XTP BULLETS

POWDER	GR.	LOAD 1			LOAD 2	
		VEL. FPS	S.D., FPS		VEL. FPS	S.D., FPS
CFE Pistol	5.9	1173	29	6.2	1337	19
Power Pistol	6.5	1258	22	6.8	1336	27
Titegroup	4.6	1208	24	4.9	1304	8
AutoComp	6.0	1190	66	6.3	1343	30
Win. 231	5.2	1269	14	5.5	1337	18
Unique	5.0	1151	29	5.3	1218	28
700-X	4.1	1062	21	4.4	1105	22



The 90-grain Hornady XTP was chosen for this light-bullet project.

Overall cartridge length 1.088 inches. Velocity is the average of five shots measured 10 feet from the muzzle. Group sizes are for five shots at 25 yards.

These loads were safe and reliable in the author's pistol, but neither the author nor the publisher accepts any responsibility for their preparation and use by others.

Having read of difficulties in seating very light bullets in the 9mm Luger, I anticipated some problems, but they simply did not materialize. I had also read that seating and crimping difficulties resulted in mediocre accuracy of such loads. Therefore, I was not quite sure how they would perform, but I was pleasantly surprised. First, every cartridge except those loaded with

4.1 grains of 700-X cycled perfectly. That load was simply too light for reliable cycling of the Ruger P95. However, the load with 4.4 grains of 700-X performed flawlessly.

Second, firing was done with the hands holding the pistol rested on sandbags. I did not attempt to measure group size for each five-shot group, but rather fired the first six series at a target placed 25 yards from the shooting bench. The entire group measured four inches and there is no doubt that my eyes, hands, and trigger finger are nowhere near perfect. Quite



The Ruger P95 performed flawlessly with all the loads tested except for the lightest load with IMR 700-X.

*"THIS PROJECT MADE ME
REALIZE ONCE AGAIN JUST
HOW MUCH I LIKE THE
RUGER P95."*



This target shows the results of firing 30 shots at a distance of 25 yards. The overall size is approximately four inches.

frankly, I consider the accuracy outstanding. I then fired the remaining series at a different target. Therefore, the targets shown in the photos represent 30 and 40 shots, and the center of the target is convincingly perforated in each case.

Third, the point of impact of the 90-grain loads is as close to that of the 115-grain bullets as I can hold. No adjustment of the sights would be necessary. This project made me realize once again just how much I like the Ruger P95.

Some of the hotter loads are rather brisk and I would not want to go higher. For my intended use of 90-grain loads in the 9mm the higher load with each powder is my working maximum. As I was shooting the loads with Unique powder, I could see pieces disappear from the center of the target. A little more testing will be required to assess accuracy more precisely, but I am very happy with the results of this project. I did not experience the problems that have been described by others, and I plan to load more 9mm with 90-grain bullets very soon. **GW**



This 158-grain subsonic load from Fiocchi is the heaviest 9mm bullet the author has encountered.

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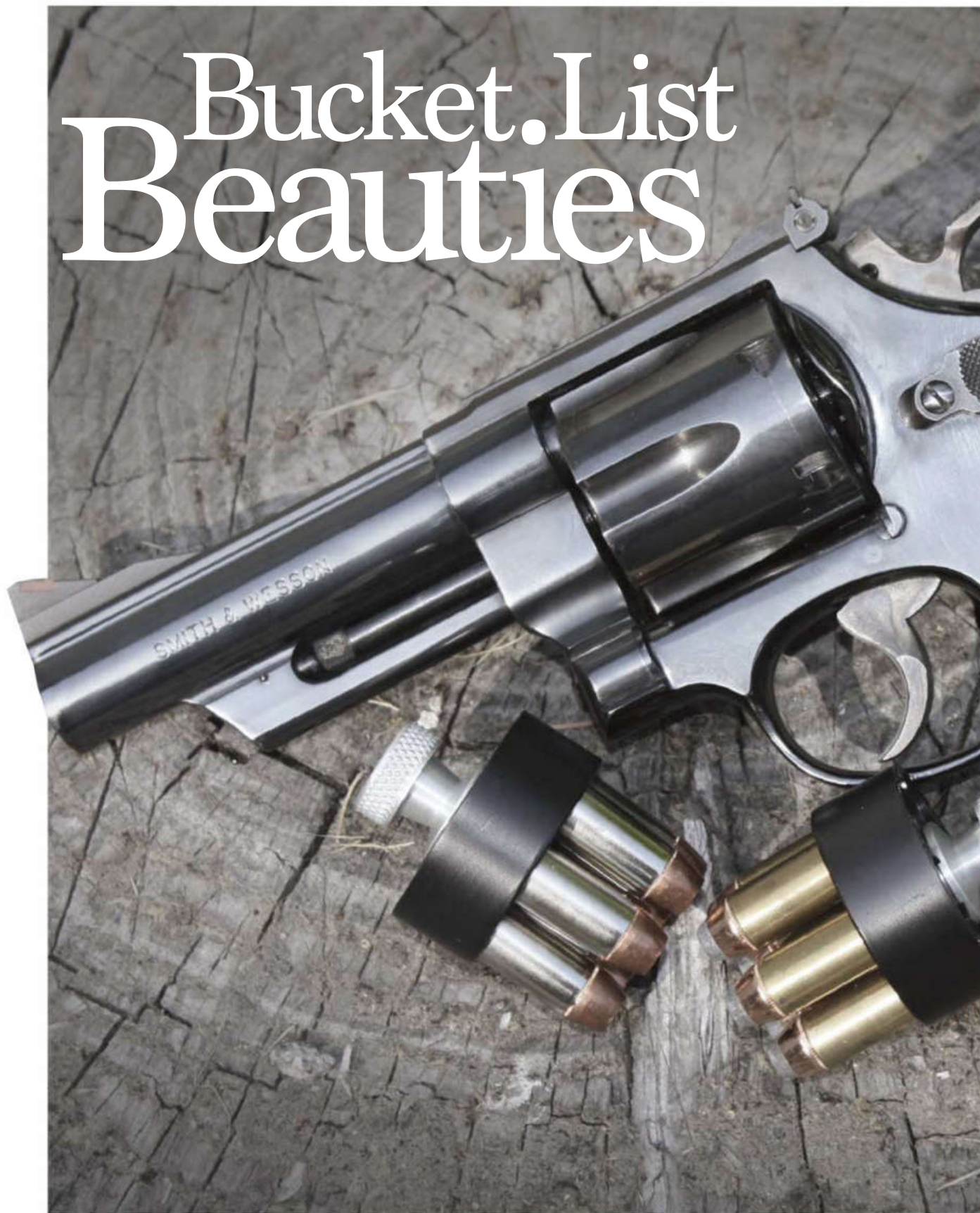
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Bucket.List Beauties





Workman was looking for a 4-inch Model 57 S&W, and after months of careful searching, and with a little help from a network of friends, he found this treasure, a like-new 57-1 that came with some extras. Buying previously owned handguns takes patience, but the prize can be worth it.

SIX SMART TIPS FOR HOW TO SEEK, SELECT AND BUY A SECONDHAND TREASURE... WITHOUT GETTING BURNED

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY DAVE WORKMAN

BUYING AND SELLING PREVIOUSLY OWNED HANDGUNS is something of an American tradition, and for the discerning shooter or collector, waiting can bring some huge rewards.

The whole process takes old-fashioned firearms knowledge and a bit of modern-day savvy about shopping, especially in this day and age of online advertising and a multitude of gun forums that all seem to include some sort of sale/swap feature.

For the discerning collector, or a shooter looking for a specific model, there are opportunities to be found online through entirely reputable and legal avenues. It's not against the law to buy a firearm via the Internet, so long as all federal, state and local laws are strictly adhered to.

However, you must be disciplined and patient, looking day after day and week after week because the good deals can appear suddenly, and vanish just as swiftly when someone else moves faster.

Due to gun laws in some states requir-

ing “universal background checks” for every gun transfer, and well-funded gun opposition lobbying groups always on the lookout for a shady or stupid transaction they can exploit, we all need to know and follow the rules.

“Want List” Network

I’d made up my mind that I wanted to acquire a Model 57 Smith & Wesson, so I put out the word to some friends who are collectors and/or licensed dealers. Soon, my one-item “want list” had gone out across several states, asking everyone to keep their eyes peeled for a good M57 with a 4-inch tube in reasonable condition, for a reasonable price.

If you’re looking for a particular gun, it is imperative to utilize several different sources. Keep an eye on places like GunBroker.com and Armslist.com, just two of many reputable Internet sales forums. They both insist that all transactions comply with all federal, state and even local firearms laws.

Fortunately, there are all kinds of legitimate reasons people sell firearms, especially in today’s economy, and there are dealers who specialize in estate sales, during which a family divests itself of a loved one’s gun collection, sometimes listing these pieces online.

At other times, somebody might need to raise cash for an emergency, or sell because they are downsizing and don’t need a particular firearm that’s been in their safe gathering dust.

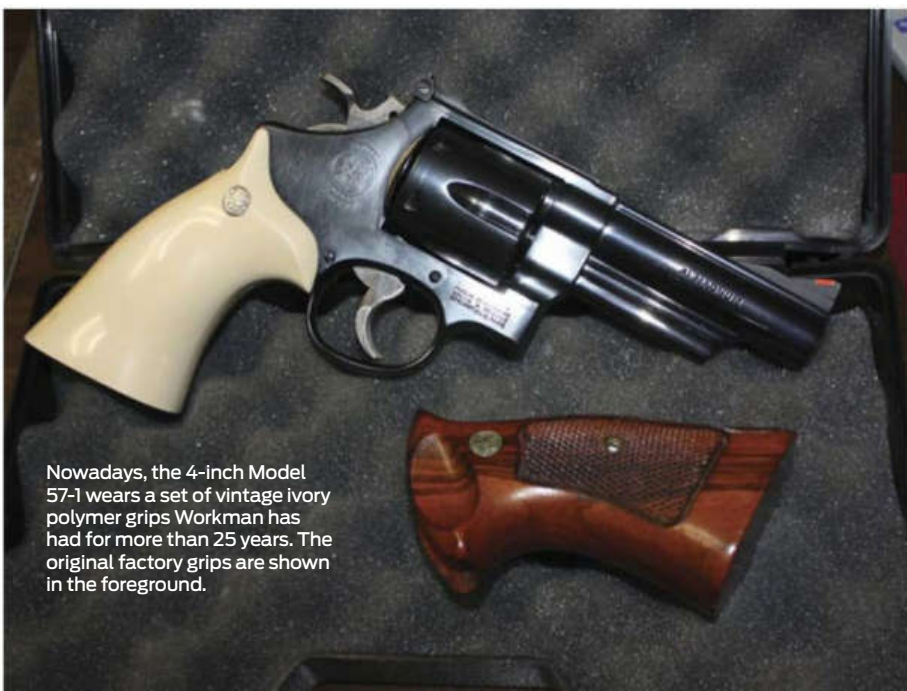
A similar situation paid off in my case. A pal of mine had told *his* pals to keep their eyes peeled and one of them found a gun on a forum to which I belonged before I spotted it, and it turned out to be just what I was looking for. He called my pal, who sent me an email. The transaction was then set in motion when I contacted the owner by telephone.

Tip #1: Do Your Homework

Start by checking state and local handgun laws. One good resource for this is HandgunLaw.us, and you should also look



The cylinder on his earlier Model 57, purchased about 30 years ago, does have the recessed chambers. Both guns are great shooters.



Nowadays, the 4-inch Model 57-1 wears a set of vintage ivory polymer grips Workman has had for more than 25 years. The original factory grips are shown in the foreground.

**“...THERE ARE
ALL KINDS OF
LEGITIMATE
REASONS PEOPLE
SELL FIREARMS,
ESPECIALLY
IN TODAY’S
ECONOMY...”**

up your state statutes online. You *must* do things by the book. People who try bending the rules or ignoring them altogether by arguing that they’re a Second Amendment purist are begging for trouble.

I belong to about a dozen different gun-related Internet forums and all of them have buy/sell sections. Peruse these regularly, and post that you are seriously shopping for XYZ brand and make of pistol or revolver. This is also a good way to find out what people may be asking for the model of handgun you want, which lets you know what you should expect to pay.

Tip #2: Be Smart

Avoid transactions that the seller may want to make in a parking lot behind some grocery store or strip mall. If something sounds not quite right, it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and stay out of trouble.

While I’m no fan of background checks, in these cases there are good reasons that go beyond getting a go-ahead from the government. It’s proof that the transaction was conducted legally and above board in cases where the seller is not someone with whom you are acquainted. It also assures that the transaction takes place in front of a witness or two.

Tip #3: Visual Evidence

If you’re serious about a gun you see listed online, ask the seller to e-

mail a few images of the piece. This is a common practice and removes any doubt that what you may be looking to purchase is what is being sold.

Tip #4: Act With Integrity

If you agree on a price, stick with it. Don’t be a jerk and try to offer somebody \$50 less at the time of purchase, just to see if you can get away with it. Show up with every penny in hand that you agreed to. Likewise, if the seller suddenly wants more money, then politely bid him a nice day and walk away.

If the sale is long distance — naturally requiring the services of at least one or two licensed firearms dealers — be prepared to send a cashier’s check or money order. Sending cash through the mail is stupid, and the seller may not want a personal check.




The author headed for the range after his legally conducted transaction, and with a bit of sight adjustment, zeroed the gun at 25 yards.

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Tip #5: Expect Integrity

You're keeping your word, so insist that the seller act with integrity as well. Be willing to say "NO" if the gun that shows up at the transaction turns out to be not as advertised. It doesn't happen often, but if the seller arrives with a different gun, or it doesn't have all the accessories that may have been promised, or it has flaws not revealed in an advertisement, you're under no obligation to go through with the transaction.

I've seen some handguns that were genuine beaters, yet the owners were asking premium prices and tried hard to convince potential buyers that they were like a Mercedes Benz on the inside.

Some deals not only involve the firearm, but there might be ammunition, a holster and other goodies that sweeten the deal. If you sell a firearm, this makes the piece more attractive to potential buyers.

Tip #6: Kick the Tires

If you find a gun at a gun show, or are able to get it in your hands prior to purchase, examine it carefully. Be willing to ask questions, such as where the seller obtained the gun, and whether they have fired it. You should always take a bore light and a soft cloth along on such shopping trips. Check the rifling in the barrel and the chamber(s), and look for scratches or even tiny cracks in the frame.

Targeted Tune-up

Fortunately, my transaction went smoothly and I was soon able to check the box beside my "bucket list" 4-inch Model 57. It was, and still is, a very good revolver in a caliber that shoots flat, hits hard and is terrific for reloading.

After taking care of all the required paperwork, a handshake and friendly discussion, I retired to the range with what was essentially a new-in-box sidearm that had been apparently gathering dust in a safe for about a decade. All it really lacked was the original box.

Using a mix of factory ammunition and handloads, it took about six shots to bring the sights into the proper alignment — it has an adjustable rear — and then I retired to the workshop to clean it up.



One can find some real bargains to fill his gun safe by careful shopping, making lots of inquiries, putting the word out among sharp-eyed friends and being prepared to jump at a deal with very little notice.



The first few rounds were with a mixed batch of ammunition at 25 yards. Still, not so bad, eh? The author is brewing up handloads to tighten this gun up considerably.

I touched up a couple of bright spots on either side of the muzzle with some cold blue followed by a rub of very fine steel wool. At 25 yards off a sandbag rest, this classic double-action is capable of very good accuracy.

It took several shots with different loads to determine what this gun likes best. I settled on a 210-grain Nosler JHP or a 210-grain Speer JHP over 20 grains of H110. I also stumbled across an unopened box of 220-grain Speer jacketed soft points, which are no longer in production. I may just give them a try with a mid-range dose of Alliant 2400 or H110, both of which have been very reliable over the years.

If you use 2400 for magnum handloads, stick with standard large pistol primers rather than magnum primers.

I've also got plans to try some Hornady XTPs and Gold Dots in this gun, which appears to have been saving itself for my arrival in its life. Noslers have worked remarkably well in my 6-inch Model 57, but I've killed a couple of deer with the 200-grain Speers through a 6.5-inch Blackhawk.

Smith & Wesson factory grips have never quite fit my hand, so I swapped them out for a set of ivory polymer grips that used to adorn my 6-inch Model 57. Nowadays that gun wears a beautiful — and very comfortable — set of Eagle Heritage grips.

I then knocked together a good holster — I already had a gunbelt — and the package was complete. I suspect that this revolver and holster will see a fair amount of use over the next several years.

Final Words

My goal was finding a 25-year-old classic revolver. The search spanned several months. For those looking to find something more recent, the shopping might be easier because there are lots of good previously owned handguns around. Depending upon the region, one might find some real bargains, too.

This is like buying a pre-owned car. Whatever you find will have some miles on it for sure. With smart shopping you just might find exactly what you're looking for. Be prepared to pounce, and never look back. **GW**

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Locking In LOCKTIME

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY STEVE SIEBERTS

ONE OF THE GREAT BENEFITS of working on a Remington M700 is the wealth of aftermarket parts for the rifle. While some may be cosmetic add-ons or personal preference replacements, others are designed to enhance the accuracy, reliability or functioning.

The installation of a titanium firing pin falls into the latter category, but before we get to the “how” of undertaking this surprisingly simple project, let’s discuss the “why.”

Locktime Length

One of the factors affecting accuracy in rifles (and to a lesser extent, pistols) is the length of time between the release of the trigger/sear mechanism and the moment of impact of the firing pin to the primer. During that time of hammer or striker fall, the shooter is constantly influencing the aim and movement of the rifle to the target. Everything that creates motion while the shooter is holding the rifle — including his or her heartbeat — may impart movement to the rifle and will ultimately affect aim to some degree.

This length of time between sear dis-

engagement and primer strike is known as locktime. The longer this length of time, the more time the shooter has to adversely affect the aim, and consequently, the quality of the shot. Conversely, it follows that the shorter this length of time is, the less opportunity the shooter has to screw things up.

Decades ago, a variety of enterprising shooters attempted to devise electronic triggers and ignition systems for firearms to reduce locktime to as close to zero as possible. Unfortunately, none of these systems worked effectively enough to be widely adopted, so we are left with me-



INSTALLING THE SPEEDLOCK FIRING PIN ON A REMINGTON M700



Above: A closer look at the pin about to be reinstalled.

Left: Here I'm reinstalling the cocking piece retaining pin back onto the cocking piece using a brass drift punch. Always make sure the retaining pin is below flush by running a soft India stone over the pin. Any shiny spots are high spots and should be stoned down below flush.

chanical means to fire the rifle and send the bullet on its way.

Locktime may be accurately measured, and the locktime of most rifles is somewhere between 2.6 and 9.0 milliseconds, with a millisecond being one thousandth of a second. The Remington M700 is at the low end of this scale, with locktimes in the range of 2.6 to 2.9 milliseconds, one reason the rifle is inherently accurate and has an advantage over other factory rifles. But even this number can be reduced, and there are a couple of ways to do it.

One is to reduce the mass of the factory firing pin to make it lighter. When I was running a classified small arms facility for the DoD, we used titanium firing pins on the custom tactical rifles we were building

using the Remington M700 action. Those factory firing pins were solid body, but since then, Remington began manufacturing cuts into the body of their firing pins, which lightens and speeds them up.

There can often be a downside to most aftermarket "improvements," of course, and titanium firing pins were no exception. We found that the stock factory firing pin, being steel, not only had weight, but mass, and with that, had momentum. So if operators were using ammunition other than factory Match grade ammunition, misfires would sometimes occur.

However, new Speedlock Systems titanium firing pins (available from Brownell's, Inc.) are shipped with Duo coil springs, which impart more energy than either factory springs or the previous springs



supplied with the pins. Speedlock firing pins are actually part aluminum and part titanium. The front of the pin is tough titanium, and the red, rear portion is aluminum. Nevertheless, if you are using a titanium spring on a tactical rifle, make sure you test it thoroughly with the type and brand of ammunition the rifle will be deployed with, as per your agency's testing protocol.

Now that we know why we want to perform this operation, let's get into the "how."

Firing Pin Replacement

Fortunately, firing pin replacement is a relatively easy job, and actually takes longer to explain it than it takes to do. As always, before we start any work on a firearm, make sure the rifle is unloaded, and remove the bolt from the rifle.

One other word of caution: anytime you are working with compressed springs, always wear good quality eye protection. Firing pins are under very strong compression. Regular readers may recall I showed how to remove this assembly in a previous article on rifle maintenance, but for those that missed it, we can use tools specifically designed to remove this assembly, or we can use a coin to capture the firing pin and unscrew the assembly from the bolt.

To do this, clamp the bottom of the cocking piece into a padded vise and retract it until the disassembly notch is exposed. Then insert a coin into the notch and release. This will capture the firing pin, and the firing pin assembly can be unscrewed from the bolt. Brownell's also sells a handy tool made by Kleinendorst Manufacturing to perform the same function, and it's a good tool to



The Speedlock Systems firing pins are made of titanium at the front, and are mated to the red, rear section which is made from aluminum.

“LOCKTIME MAY BE ACCURATELY MEASURED, AND THE LOCKTIME OF MOST RIFLES IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 2.6 AND 9.0 MILLISECONDS...”

keep in the range bag or accessory container that goes to the range.

To use the Kleinendorst tool, put it over the bolt shroud, then place the hook over the edge of the cocking piece and swing the lever over, then unscrew the firing pin assembly from the bolt. Once we have the firing pin assembly removed from the bolt, Kleinendorst also makes another tool to take apart the assembly into its component parts. It's a very simple tool to use. Screw the firing pin assembly into the tool and run the large screw into the face of the firing pin to compress the firing pin spring.

As the spring is compressed, it will expose the cocking piece from the bolt

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“FIRING PIN REPLACEMENT IS A RELATIVELY EASY JOB...”

This shows the firing pin assembly installed onto the bolt disassembly tool, propped up on the bench block, ready for the starter punch to be used to remove the cocking piece retaining pin.



The new firing pin, firing pin spring and bolt shroud installed onto the bolt disassembly tool. Turning the large screw (on the left) in or out compresses or decompresses the firing pin spring as needed. Turning the large screw in also exposes the cross hole in the firing pin for the cocking piece retaining pin.

shroud. Keep screwing the large screw in until the cocking piece retaining pin is exposed. Once the pin is exposed, we can drive it out with a pin punch.

Finishing the Job

I usually use a short and stubby starter punch to get the pin going, and then use the long 3/32-inch punch to drive it out. This is a good practice with any pins you are driving out. I have several starter punches that I have made from broken 1/16-inch punches.

After you work on firearms for a while, you will accumulate broken punches. I usually use my bench grinder to grind them to the diameter and length I need, and then keep them on the bench where they're handy. I probably have about a dozen I've made this way over the years. I usually prop up the assembly on a bench block to get a good angle on the pin, and then drive it out.

Once the cocking piece retaining pin has been driven out, remove the cocking



This is the stock Remington firing pin, with lightening cuts machined into the firing pin body. These cuts reduce weight to increase firing pin speed and decrease locktime.

The retaining pin and the firing pin assembly tool are now reinstalled, and the entire assembly is about to be reinstalled onto the bolt body.



piece from the back of the firing pin and unscrew the large screw from the firing pin tool in order to relax the firing pin spring. Unscrew it almost all the way off, but do not unscrew it all the way.

Once the large screw is back out almost all the way, you can unscrew the bolt shroud from the disassembly tool and remove the entire firing pin assembly from the tool. Now that we have everything apart, take the new titanium firing pin and insert it into the same firing pin tool that we just used.

Insert the Duo spring onto the firing pin. Then take the bolt shroud and compress the spring until it starts to screw onto the tool, and use the large screw to compress the firing pin spring until the cocking piece hole is exposed outside the bolt shroud. Once the hole is exposed, you can install the cocking piece back onto the rear of the firing pin and drive the pin back in. I use a brass drift punch to drive the pin.

Once I have the pin back in, I want to make sure the pin is below flush on both

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My son, Kyle, getting ready to test out the rifle with the new pin installed.

sides. I don't want the retaining pin dragging on the inside of the bolt shroud, as this can cause inconsistent firing pin fall (which can translate to inconsistent firing pin strike on the primer) and inconsistent ignition (which can negatively impact group size).

I check to make sure the retaining pin is flush by running a soft India stone over both sides of the pin. If it raises a shiny spot, that's a high spot that needs to be taken down below flush of the cocking piece.

Once the retaining pin is in place, unscrew the large screw on the bolt disassembly tool to relax the firing pin spring, and install the firing pin removal tool back on and unscrew the entire reassembled firing assembly from the bolt tool. Screw the firing pin assembly back onto the bolt, and reinstall the bolt back into the rifle.

Try dry firing the rifle several times and you will notice the difference, especially if you have the Jewell trigger installed. When you take it to the range, dry fire the

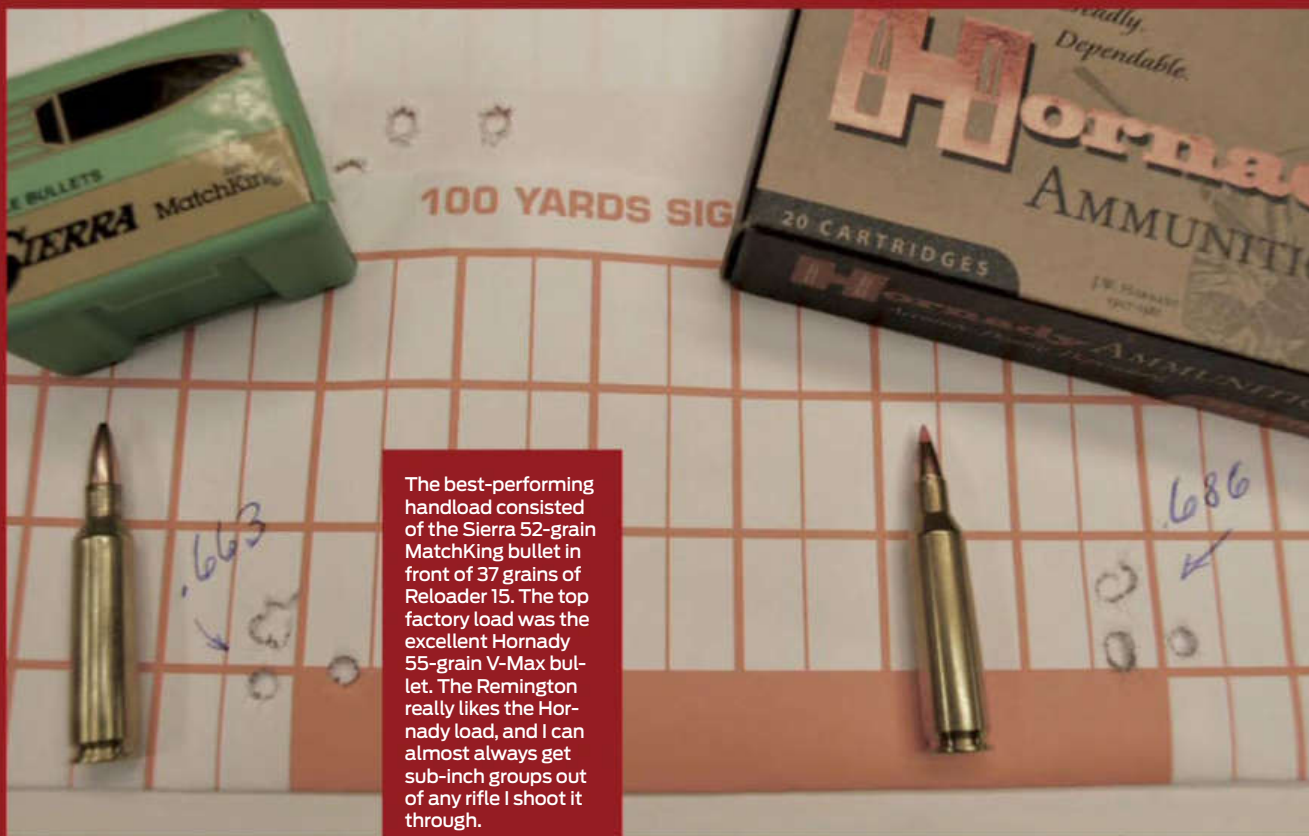
rifle again and notice how little the crosshairs will jump when you do so. This is because there is now very little firing pin mass coming to an abrupt halt when the rifle is dry fired.

Range Testing

Taking the project rifle to the range produced excellent results. Our riflescope and spotting scope were both from Nightforce. This is a combination that has been invaluable in my rifle testing, and the spotting scope makes viewing the small .22-caliber holes a breeze, no matter what yardage.

The last time we went to the range we got groups in the 0.3 and 0.6 range. This time, we got groups under 3/4 of an inch, and more of them. I tested the rifle using two handloads and several factory loads. The handloads were 52-grain Sierra MatchKing, and 52-grain Speer Varmint bullets in front of 37 grains of Reloader 15. Fac-

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The best-performing handload consisted of the Sierra 52-grain MatchKing bullet in front of 37 grains of Reloader 15. The top factory load was the excellent Hornady 55-grain V-Max bullet. The Remington really likes the Hornady load, and I can almost always get sub-inch groups out of any rifle I shoot it through.

tory loads included two from Federal, the 55-grain Fusion hunting round and the 55-grain offering loaded with the Barnes all-copper bullet. We also shot two from Hornady, the 40-grain and 55-grain V-Max.

I believe the new firing pin helped increase our consistency, and I think the targets proved it.

Next month, I'll continue work on the Remington M700. We've got the rifle shooting pretty well, but I think it can benefit from some additional components. Stay tuned! **GW**

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CARBINE

TEXT & PHOTOS BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

OVER THE PAST DECADE THERE has been a major shift in the hierarchy of sporting rifles. The lever action 30-30 carbine, long tenured as the “All-American Sporting Rifle,” has been supplanted by the AR-15, also known as the “Modern Sporting Rifle” and new “King of the Hill.”

Surprisingly, not everyone agrees on the “why” behind the AR-15’s rise to prominence. Some credit the gun’s military history, while others will point to the current increased popularity of defensive weapons. Still others merely mention the thousands that have been sold because of efforts to ban them from the civilian market.

The overall length of this carbine and the reduced weight go a long way in enhancing its handling qualities.



Just about every AR has a flash hider, but how many people ever test them? Fortunately, the author was using this rifle to test out a night vision scope and says the Accu-Tac flash hider works better than he ever expected.



And while each of these factors has clearly played some part, I'd submit that the major factor has been the versatility of its design.

I doubt anyone has ever added up the total number of variations that could be created from the basic AR-15 with the preponderance of parts being marketed. It would seem as if the new monarch is the perfect rifle if it wasn't for its one weakness, the 5.56 cartridge. Truth be told, the 5.56/.223 is at best a varmint round. Sure, we have to give it an A+ for its match accuracy potential and some may even rate it as a somewhat fair defensive cartridge, but it definitely leaves plenty to be desired.

Proof of this is the ever-growing number of alternate cartridges being developed for the AR such as the 6.5 Grendel, 6.8 SPC, .300 Blackout and the 7.62x40WT. The amusing aspect of these developments is that it brings the AR-15 to the power level of the 30-30 carbines it has now overshadowed.

However, many are not satisfied with these results and this has led to the resurrection of the AR-15's forefather, the AR-10 with its .308 Winchester chambering. The really interesting aspect is it was the AR-15 that has gone through 50 years of service, and the advances developed for it are now instantly transferred to the new AR-10s. Several companies have introduced these new models in the past couple of years, but few had gone to the efforts put forth by Wilson Combat of Berryville, Arkansas.

Wilson Combat

When you mention the names Bill Wilson or Wilson Combat your first thoughts are going to be centered on the Model 1911 handguns. In the handgun industry Wilson Combat has long been considered the master of the 1911. In 2000, Wilson Combat unveiled their Scattergun Technologies division and began producing the ultimate combat shotgun with their customizing

The Wilson/Rodgers Super-Stoc was comfortable during firing and it was a blessing to finally eliminate the “wobble” normally found in collapsible stocks.



“BILL WILSON HAD SET OUT HIS STANDARDS FOR A .308 AR AND HIS TEAM ACHIEVED THEIR GOAL.”

efforts on the Remington 870.

The growth of the AR-15 market only made it logical that they turned their skills towards this rifle. I have had the pleasure of testing several of their AR-15s and have yet to find a single flaw in their production quality.

It was while I was investigating their “Recon” model AR-15, chambered in the then-wildcat 7.62x40WT (Wilson Tactical) cartridge, that I was first exposed to Wilson’s method of engineering. Known as the “7.62x40WT Project,” this introduction of a new cartridge/rifle combination represents the efforts of the entire Wilson team. They studied each aspect of both the rifle and cartridge to see how they would interact and made the needed design alterations to create this upgrade to the basic weapon. When they introduced this combination all of the questions had been answered and all of the unknowns had been solved.

It was only about a year later that Bill mentioned to me that very soon he and his crew would be starting work on the .308 AR.

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“WILSON COMBAT TOOK ABOUT A YEAR TO FULLY DEVELOP THEIR RIFLE BUT IN DOING SO THEY RE-EVALUATED EVERY PART OF THE PLATFORM IN AN EFFORT TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE .308 AR.”



Top Left: There is no forward assist on the Wilson .308.

Bottom left: All of the fire controls are exactly where you would expect them. When you are talking about Wilson Combat you can also expect the highest of quality. The machining on the receivers would make any company proud.

Right: When placed next to a 5.56 bolt/bolt carrier group (right) you can see how the whole rifle is enlarged over an AR-15. Wilson built the .308 AR from the ground up with careful attention given to even the smallest parts.

Wilson Combat .308 Project

The common name for a .308 Win. AR is the AR-10, but unlike the AR-15 there are no set standards throughout the industry. The original AR-10 was the predecessor to the AR-15/M16 and it was generally set aside once the rifle was scaled down to the 5.56/.223 for military trials. It may have been the AR-15 that was adopted by our military, but fortunately a few companies kept the larger AR concept alive. Since that time AR-10 has been basically a generic name assigned to the larger ARs.

Wilson Combat took about a year to fully develop their rifle but in doing so they re-evaluated every part of the platform in an effort to create the ultimate .308 AR. According to Bill Wilson, their goal the entire time was "to design and build a premium quality lightweight .308 platform carbine that is accurate and reliable with minimum weight and bulk."

The team started by designing a billet flattop style upper and mated it to their billet lower. Both are machined from 7075 T-6

aluminum with special care given to the weight and ergonomics. All edges and sharp corners have been rounded to create a compact and comfortable platform. I will admit to snickering a little when I noticed that these parts are referred to as "Billet-AR" receivers on the Wilson website.

All of the controls are laid out in standard AR fashion but there is no forward assist on this carbine. Honestly, I've never been a big fan of the forward assist so its absence didn't bother me, but I was happy to see that they maintained the dust cover over the ejection port.

The lower receiver has an integral trigger guard with plenty of room in case the user is wearing gloves. This may seem like a small item until you consider the tactical uses of this carbine or the hunter in the woods during mid-winter. The safety, bolt release and magazine release all work without a single bit of drag and you can tell these parts were fitted with care. No aspects of this carbine have been neglected.

The Wilson Combat TTU (Tactical Trig-

ger Unit) single stage trigger true is a real boon for shooters. Its four-pound pull is smooth and precise. There is the slightest take-up as the four pounds of pressure is applied and then the trigger breaks perfectly. I use this self-contained unit in my own ARs and consider it one of Wilson Combat's greatest products.

It should be noted that the Wilson crew designed the lower receiver to accept the metal and polymer "SR-25" pattern magazines and the sample rifle came with a Magpul 20-round unit.

The upper receiver carries the traditional picatinny top rail that is continued along the length of the T.R.I.M. (Tactical Rail Interface, Modular) Rail. This handguard is free-floated and allows the attachment of additional rail segments in the 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions. The barrel on the sample carbine

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It may not look like the "Gun that Won the West," but the AR-15 and its big brother the AR-10 truly are "All-American."

is Wilson's lightweight model that has a length of 14.75 inches and a 1 in 10 twist rate.

To reduce the weight of the barrel there are milled flutes both fore and aft of the gas block. An Accu-Tac flash hider is pinned and welded in place to comply with the 16-inch legal limits. Wilson's low-profile gas system is totally contained under the handguard. This system mates to the premium bolt and bolt carrier, which are NP3 plated.

The pistol grip is produced by Bravo Company and the collapsible buttstock is the Wilson/Rodgers Super-Stoc. A really nice feature of this stock is the second lever that eliminates all of the "wobble room" associated with collapsible stocks. There are also sling attachment cups on both sides of the buttstock and handguard.

The rifle is finished with a combination of Mil-Spec anodizing and Armor-Tuff. No purist is ever going to call an AR-style rifle beautiful, but the finish on this rifle was a case of perfection; smooth and even without the slightest trace of machining marks. There may not be any of the walnut or deep bluing that's associated with other fine firearms, but there is a beauty to both form and function.

The Wilson design team nailed the form, but subsequent range testing would prove whether or not they succeeded with the function.

Range Time

Part of the problem normally encountered with range testing was solved when Wilson Combat sent the sample rifle equipped with their Accu-Rizer scope mount and a Leupold 3-9 VX-R scope. Although the magnification range of this scope is a little higher than I would suggest for a rifle of this size, the scope definitely came in handy during the accuracy testing.

Knowing that these rifles will see the majority of their use in the hands of big game hunters, I selected what I would consider the mid-range weight for the .308 Winchester. Hornady, Winchester and Remington all have a 168-grain load that would help achieve a direct comparison. Very little effort was needed to adjust the scope to where all three loads were hitting "on paper" and I proceeded with my chronographing and accuracy testing.

After several years of running accuracy testing on various rifles I will say that this trip to the range was a true surprise. Normally a given rifle will prefer one load over another. Also, as long as all loads are quality ammunition there isn't a way to tell which will be the preferred load without testing. This day the Wilson rifle only showed a 3/8-inch to 1/2-inch difference in group size no matter what load I used.

The Remington Match load with its MatchKing BTHP

produced the best group of the day at 7/8 inches for five shots. However, the Hornady and Winchester loads were close behind with 1.25-inch five-shot groups. To baffle me a little more, there was only an 84-fps difference between the fastest and slowest shots for the day no matter what brand was used.

After firing four five-shot groups with each brand I was a bit baffled but very pleased with the overall performance of the Wilson Combat .308. Feeding and ejections were flawless throughout the day. I was also somewhat thankful for the amount of recoil that was soaked up by the gas system. The .308 Win. is not exactly a heavy kicking round but after a while even it will start to wear on your shoulder. I'm sure that if this was a bolt gun I would not feel as good after firing sixty rounds.

After I had completed everything I needed to do with the paper targets I

switched to shooting surplus NATO ball at metal plates that were spaced throughout my range. The carbine was fun when shooting from a rest, but it was even more fun firing offhand. The Wilson crew not only had the "form" down pat, but the "function" part of this rifle is just downright fun. Its short length and total weight of 7.7 pounds resulted in a quick handling carbine.

I wrapped up my session by moving over to firing at a 12-inch square metal plate placed at a distance of five hundred yards. After a couple of shots to find the range, hits were consistent and misses could be disregarded as operator error. Just the sound and target reaction at that distance showed the difference between a 5.56 AR and one chambered in .308.

Homerun

Bill Wilson had set out his standards for a .308 AR and his team achieved their

goal. The rifle was lighter than most .308s and there is no doubt about its overall quality. The accuracy results were very good and the power rating of the cartridge allows this carbine to play with the big boys. Its handling characteristics would make it a natural as a defensive weapon, but it could also do double duty as a reliable hunting rifle.

This model was Wilson Combat's first .308 AR, but they have since started offering other models with various barrel lengths. One advantage of ordering from Wilson Combat is that they are a custom shop and always allow you to make variations to their standard models.

The AR-15 may be the new "King of the Hill" in firearms, but if recent trends holds true it may have to share the throne with the AR-10. The result of a yearlong project was that Bill got the rifle he wanted, and it may well be exactly what you want. **GW**

AR ROYALTY



SPECIFICATIONS

Wilson Combat

Model: .308 AR
Caliber: .308 Winchester
Length: 36.5 inches
 (stock fully extended)
Weight: 7.7 lbs. (unloaded)
Barrel: 14.7 inches lightweight & fluted, 1-10 twist

Receivers: 7075-T6 Aluminum
Stock: Wilson/Rogers Super-Stoc
Pistol Grip: Bravo Company
Sights: None
Muzzle Treatment: Accu-Tac
 Flash Hider
Handguard: 12.75-inch T.R.I.M. Rail
Magazine: Magpul 20-round

MSRP: \$2,995.00

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Remington 168-gr. MatchKing	2,467 fps	.87 inches
Hornady 168-gr. Match	2,475 fps	1.12 inches
Winchester 168-gr. Ballistic Silvertip	2,436 fps	1.25 inches

Notes: Velocity is average of 10 shots measured 10 feet from the muzzle and accuracy is in inches for the best five-shot group at 100 yards.

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From Gyrojet to a Mauser

► BY CRAIG HODGKINS

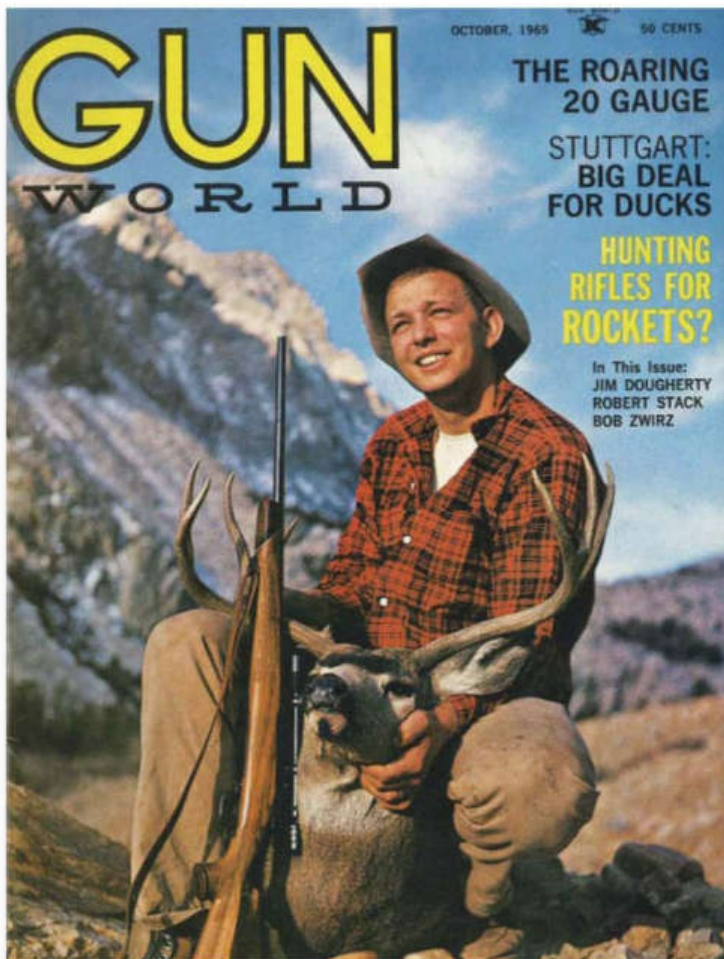
THE OCTOBER 1965 ISSUE OF *GUN WORLD* was chock full of good stuff, including Part II of the story on the MBAAssociates Gyrojet (see our September issue for the fascinating tale of that family of rocket handguns), a field test of the “new” Ithaca Model 37 Featherweight, a torture test of a Centurian Mauser using high pressure loads, and an historical piece on how Bruce Hodgdon launched (or at least seriously boosted) an industry with a few hundred pounds of what we now know as 4198 and 3031.

Our second look at the Gyrojet in as many months focused more on MBA’s proposed carbine model, then in the early stages of design, and offered a more in-depth look at the Gyrojet “rocket round,” or ammunition. All of this “looking” took place during the California Arms Collectors meetings at—of all places—the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California.

“Weight of this carbine is revolutionary in itself,” wrote Editor Tommy Bish. “Even though it carries a walnut stock, walnut forearm and grips, it still weighs in the neighborhood of three pounds. Overall length is thirty-three inches and barrel length for the current 13mm model is eighteen inches.”

But instead of launching the product at the meetings, MBA leadership insisted that they were in attendance “for the express purpose of gaining varied ideas for the redesign of the carbine.”

The Mauser test was designed to provide feedback of another kind.



The well-traveled Bish was invited to tour the Southern California headquarters of the Golden State Arms Corporation, manufacturer of the Centurian. More specifically, he was “shown the high pressure chamber where each barreled action must undergo—and pass—a firing of special test ammunition which creates a minimum of 70,000 pounds per square inch of pressure on the rifle’s action.”

Bish looked on as the Golden State team assembled a rifle built from components of his choosing, including an unblued Mauser-type action and a .30 caliber barrel. Soon, a gunsmith had “lost no time in chambering it to .308 and installing it in a receiver, then headspacing it.”

Following the high-pressure test, Bish examined it. The primers showed no signs of malformation, and the headspace was found to be perfect. Later field tests at *Gun World*’s favorite range confirmed Bish’s view that the Centurian was a very workable model for a production-line rifle.

The ill-fated Gyrojet carbine? Not so much. **GW**

— Gary Swanson—*Gun World*’s Game Technology Editor—returned to our cover in October of 1965 (he’d graced our March ’65 cover as well), posing with a deer he’d taken in the High Sierras with his customized Model 70 Winchester in his favorite .270 caliber.

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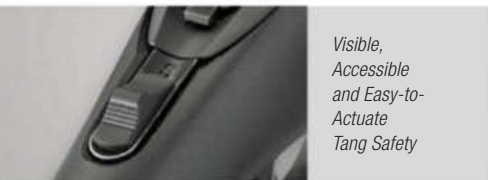
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